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MARTINA
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**16 EXTRA
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INSIDE!**

COUNTRY WEEKLY

THE INSIDE STORIES ON COUNTRY MUSIC'S HOTTEST
FEBRUARY 9, 2015

BRAD PAISLEY

**The superstar
talks about
his first No. 1
in three years,
his world tour
and losing his
friend Little
Jimmy Dickens**

**RASCAL
FLATTS**
takes on
new roles

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makes
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BY BRAD PAISLEY
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- Brad Paisley



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WE JUST CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF RIGHT NOW!

THE HIT LIST



Twice the Odds of Winning

◀ Nothing quite like a little husband-wife rivalry. With the 57th annual Grammy Awards airing Feb. 8, songwriters **RODNEY CLAWSON** and **NICOLLE GALYON** will get a feel for what that's like when they compete against each other in the Best Country Song category. Rodney is up for his **KENNY CHESNEY** chart-topper "American Kids," while his beautiful bride, Nicolle, is up for her No. 1 **MIRANDA LAMBERT** hit, "Automatic."



Broken Record

◀ **RYAN BINGHAM** recently performed at City Winery in Nashville in support of his new album, *Fear*

and *Saturday Night*, which dropped on Jan. 20. The Oscar/Grammy winner captivated the sold-out audience with a sampling of gritty new tunes, including CW favorites "Broken Heart Tattoos" and "Hands of Time."



Sky High

▲ **MARTINA McBRIDE**, **GLADYS KNIGHT** and R&B artist **ESTELLE** performed in Nashville on Jan. 14 for the first episode of Skyville Live's new live streaming music series, which brings together musical vets and up-and-coming acts of all genres. The three divas performed their hits, shared personal stories and interacted with the audience. Check out skyvilivelive.com for more info on future performers.



Banner Performance

▲ Fresh off their performance at the CMT Ultimate Kickoff Party on Jan. 9, **LADY ANTEBELLUM** took the field at the inaugural College Football Playoff National Championship game on Jan. 12 and sang a beautifully harmonized national anthem. Talk about great exposure—the football game was the most-watched program in ESPN history.

Hallelujah, Amen

▼ Do not miss **ERIC CHURCH**'s The Outsiders World Tour when it's near your hometown. At his recent Nashville gig, the Chief blended the spontaneity of Bruce Springsteen, the theatrics of Iron Maiden and the all-sides-of-the-stage performance of George Strait into one cohesive thrill ride. It was, dare we say, a religious experience.



THE JUKEBOX

Essential songs from
the artists featured
in this issue!

Brad Paisley

"Welcome to the Future"
"Whiskey Lullaby"

Chris Young

"Tomorrow"
"Who I Am With You"

Dr. Ralph Stanley

"Man of Constant Sorrow"
"O Death"

Emily West

"Blue Sky"

Jeffrey Steele

"I Can't Stop"
"Once a Cowboy"

Mac Powell

"More Than Me"

Ryan Bingham

"Hands of Time"
"Bread and Water"

Love and Theft

"Angel Eyes"

Caroline Spence

"Whiskey Watered Down"

LoCash

"I Love This Life"

Jamie Lynn Spears

"Run"

Sundy Best

"I Want You to Know
(World Famous
Love Song)"



Look for this
Country Weekly
playlist on **rdio**!

COVER STORY

44

Brad Paisley

He's constantly working at his craft, and is already putting together the plans for his summer tour. But one thing's for sure—he'll be "Crushin' It" all year long. Brad talks about getting better at songwriting, his friendship with the legendary Little Jimmy Dickens and launching his own apparel line.

24 | Billy Gilman

The former child star still has dreams of country stardom—and now he can be himself.

50 | Vince Gill

One of country's most charitable stars joins a partnership to help revitalize small towns.

52 | Movie Mania

Four blockbuster films in 1980 helped push country music into the mainstream.

56 | Emily West

After a smokin' stint on *America's Got Talent*, she's got a new destination in mind.

60 | Mac Powell

The lead singer of Third Day takes a left-handed approach to his latest album.

62 | Jeffrey Steele

The prolific songwriter overcomes a personal tragedy and renews his faith.

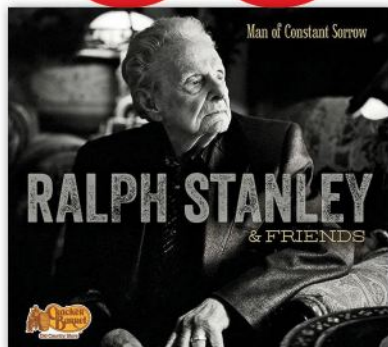




27 NASH

Martina McBride has joined the growing roster of Nash Icon Music, and she couldn't be more thrilled at the prospect. Martina talks about the creative freedom she'll enjoy with the new label, which focuses on signature artists from the last 25 years. And find out why 2015 is shaping up as an exciting year for Chris Young.

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Sundy Best.

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[LETTERS]

Dear Readers:

BRAD PAISLEY is a mainstay in country music, always dependable and reliable when it comes to bringing us good music. This time is no different, with his "Perfect Storm" soaring to the top of the chart. We sat down with the guitar whiz to talk about kicking off his world tour, how he's doing after the loss of his buddy **LITTLE JIMMY**

DICKENS and how everything in his life has come together to create his very own perfect storm.

In this week's *NASH*, we catch up with **MARTINA MCBRIDE**, who just signed a new record deal with Nash Icon Music. Martina has taken to her independence and is doing things her own way. We also get the details from **CHRIS YOUNG** on his co-headlining tour with **LEE BRICE**; we bring you a new page called Studio 615 that features **LOCASH**; **MADDIE & TAE** check yes or no, and so much more.

Don't miss next week's issue, on stands Feb. 9, as we take a look at **TIM MCGRAW** and **FAITH HILL**'s love in our Valentine's Day issue. Plus we list country's cutest couples.

See you next week!



LISA KONICKI, Editor in Chief

Tell Us What YOU Think!

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Please include your name, address and daytime phone number with all correspondence. *Country Weekly* assumes no responsibility for returning unsolicited material, including, but not limited to, photographs, artwork, manuscripts and letters. Letters may be edited for clarity and length.

MISSING LITTLE JIMMY

Did I miss an edition of *Country Weekly* or have you not run a story of the death of Little Jimmy Dickens? I'm a subscriber but I could have missed it.

— **MARIANNE VARGO**
Medina, Ohio

Editor's reply: *Thank you for your letter, Marianne. We did a six-page feature on Little Jimmy's passing in our Feb. 2 issue with Miranda Lambert on the cover. I hope you were able to catch our tribute to the Opry legend.*

BE NICE TO BLAKE

Your magazine, at least through my eyes, never seems to be able to just pay Blake Shelton a compliment. You gave his "Lonely Tonight" a B and then complained that Ashley Monroe was relegated to a harmony role and playing second fiddle. The CD is Blake's, not Ashley's. She is truly an awesome singer, I agree, but it's Blake Shelton & Ashley Monroe, not Ashley Monroe & Blake Shelton.

— **CLAIRE CARTER**
St. Johns, Mich.

Editor's reply: *Thank you for your letter, Claire. But just because the reviewer commented on wanting to hear more from Ashley, it's not a slam on Blake. And we do have an archive of issues that pay Blake many compliments over the years, as we are big fans of that guy.*

MAKE ROOM FOR MANDY

We are wondering why you never have a lot of information about Mandy Barnett. The girl has a beautiful voice. Unlike a lot of the music coming from Nashville now, she is true country. She has done so many Patsy Cline shows in Nashville, and she is the real deal. She deserves to be on the front cover of your magazine as much as anyone. We love real country music at our house, not some of this stuff being recorded today under the name of country music. Mandy has an incredible voice, a real God-given talent. Give her a chance and check out her music. Thanks.

— **BARBARA MADDOX**
Adairsville, Ga.



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COUNTRY WEEKLY

THE INSIDE STORIES ON COUNTRY MUSIC'S HOTTEST STARS

[THE BIG PICTURE]



PHOTO BY RICHARD HARGRAUGH/ABC

MIRROR MIRROR

Luke Bryan shoots tequila with *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* sidekick Guillermo during one of Guillermo's Back to Back interviews at the American Music Awards.

the mix

ALL YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT THE STARS OF COUNTRY—AND THEN SOME!

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go to **COUNTRYWEEKLY.COM**



Grabbing Grammys

Who's going to take home the lion's share of honors at the 57th Grammy Awards, Sunday night, Feb. 8? You can likely pencil in **ERIC CHURCH** or **MIRANDA LAMBERT** for at least a couple, as they're both leading the country pack with four nominations apiece, including Best Country Album—Eric for *The Outsiders* and Miranda for *Platinum*. But **BRANDY CLARK**, with two nominations, could also pull a dark horse upset somewhere. Look for additional awards to be given in bluegrass, Americana and folk categories, plus outstanding performances from Eric and many others from all musical genres. The 57th Grammy Awards telecast airs live from the Staples Center in Los Angeles on Feb. 8 on CBS at 8 p.m. ET.



DANDY BRANDY
Grammy-nominated Brandy Clark chats with *Good Morning America*'s Amy Robach before performing live.



CARRIE-OKE OKIE

In a twisted version of karaoke, the ladies of *The Talk* pantomime some of Carrie Underwood's greatest hits for the Okie to guess.



RASCAL FLATTS IN NEW ROLES



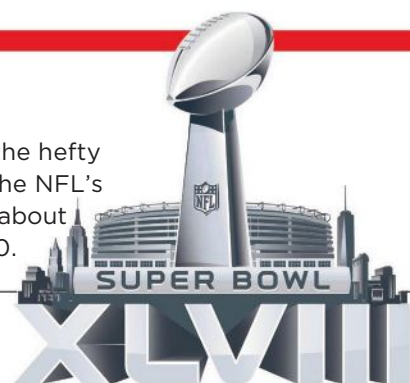
The members of **RASCAL FLATTS** have already dabbled in acting, appearing as themselves on an episode of *CSI*, but they'll do more than dabble as actors in the upcoming

miniseries *To Appomattox*. The trio's Jay DeMarcus said, "They're roles that give us each an opportunity to do our best job at them." He laughs and adds, "You won't recognize us

because we all have beards, and we'll be a little grungy. And we get to carry muskets!" The movie follows a group of men from the beginning of the Civil War to the end. In addition to acting in the series, Jay is working with series writer Michael Beckner to compose and score the miniseries. The all-star cast also includes **DWIGHT YOAKAM, TRACE ADKINS, KIX BROOKS, SARA EVANS** and **LAURA BELL BUNDY**.

Commercial Success

A 30-second commercial spot during this year's Super Bowl fetched the hefty sum of \$4.5 million. While not in the same ballpark—err, stadium—of the NFL's biggest event, a 30-second commercial during NBC's **THE VOICE** runs about \$270,000, while one during ABC's **NASHVILLE** tabs in around \$97,000.



Musical Notes



ACCOLADES

Following in the treadmarks of country icons like **JIMMIE RODGERS**, **CHARLEY PRIDE** and **ALAN JACKSON**, **GARTH BROOKS** had four streets named after him in his hometown of Tulsa, Okla. In honor of Garth's seven performances at Tulsa's BOK Center during his current world tour, the venue renamed four streets around the arena after four of the Country Music Hall of Famer's biggest hits: Low Places Lane, Rodeo Drive, Shameless Boulevard and Thunder Rolls Road.

KACEY MUSGRAVES, 26, and **FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE**'s **BRIAN KELLEY**, 29, and **TYLER HUBBARD**, 27, were named to *Forbes* maga-

zine's annual 30 Under 30 in Music list. Brian and Tyler earned more than \$24 million last year, while their bro-rific smash single "Cruise" moved more than 8 million units to become the most-downloaded country song of all time. On the other end of the country music spectrum, Kacey has earned two Grammys and garnered universal acclaim for her official debut album, *Same Trailer Different Park*.



Smoke Screen

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Smoking may be hazardous to your health, but it appears that it's good for your ears when it comes to recent country music song titles. Take a drag of these six smoky offerings.



WHAT'S THAT IN EARS

Ears: Everybody has a pair. They hold your sunglasses up, right? But for performing artists, "in ears" are a monitoring system that allows them to hear what the band sounds like during a live performance without the

ambient noise. A sound engineer (remember FOH: front of house?) creates a mix of instrumentation and vocals during sound check according to each performer's preference that feeds into his or her "ears."





LADY ANTEBELLUM recently announced their Wheels Up 2015 Tour, so named for their flight-occupied latest album, *747*. The tour begins Feb. 28 and takes the trio through Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Australia, then returns to the United States for a spring/summer run starting May 1. For the tour's fall leg, **HUNTER HAYES** and **SAM HUNT** will also be on the bill.



Feb. 16-17
Niagara Falls, Ontario
Fallsview Casino

Feb. 28
Oslo, Norway
Spektrum

March 1
Stockholm,
Sweden
Ericsson Globe

March 7
Dublin, Ireland
The O2 Dublin

March 8
London, England
The O2

March 13
Ipswich, Australia
CMC Rocks QLD

March 15
Sydney, Australia
Qantas Credit Union
Arena

March 17
Melbourne, Australia
Rod Laver Arena

Musical Notes

CONTINUED

IN MEMORY

HENRY STRZELECKI, one of Nashville's



premier session musicians, died Dec. 30 at age 75 after be-

ing struck by a car. Henry played bass on George Jones' "He Stopped Loving Her Today," Roy Orbison's rock classic "Oh Pretty Woman" and countless other recordings.

DONNA DOUGLAS, best known for her



role as Elly May Clampett on the iconic TV series *The Beverly*

Hillbillies, died Jan. 1 from pancreatic cancer at age 82. She also recorded several gospel albums during the 1980s.

ANDRAE CROUCH, gospel singer and



songwriter, died Jan. 8 at age 79 of a heart attack. Often called the "Father

of Modern Gospel," Andrae performed on the Grand Ole Opry and the TV show *Barbara Mandrell and the Mandrell Sisters* and was a member of the Gospel Music Hall of Fame.

COUNTRY CRUISING

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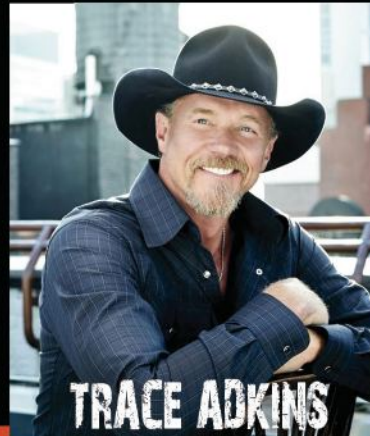
WE HAVE MORE COUNTRY MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT THAN ANY OTHER CRUISE. WE WILL FEATURE SEVEN (7) HEADLINERS AND OVER TWENTY (20) OTHER ARTISTS! AND ALTHOUGH YOU MAY NOT KNOW ALL OF THEIR NAMES, YOU SURELY WILL BY THE END OF THE CRUISE!

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SEISMIC IMPACT



Can you believe it's been 25 years since **REBA McENTIRE** made her big-screen debut in the cult classic *Tremors*? While she was ignored by the Academy for a Best Supporting Actress nomination, she gets our gold statuette for her portrayal of a gun-toting, husband-doting survivalist who dished out Oscar-worthy lines



that would make Meryl Streep tremble with fear (much like the fear induced by an underground graboid). Check out some of Reba's seismic zingers from the film, and don't miss our "**Box Office Buckaroos**" for more silver-screen countrification on **page 52**.

"YOU DIDN'T GET PENETRATION EVEN WITH THE ELEPHANT GUN."

"WHEW, STINKS, TOO."

"PHONE'S OUT. ROAD'S OUT. WE'RE ON OUR OWN."

"I'LL MAKE 'EM PAY ATTENTION, DAMNIT."

"MAKE NOISE. EVERYBODY! COME ON!"

"HOLD ON. YOU GUYS OUGHTA TAKE SOMETHING THAT PACKS MORE PUNCH THAN THAT THIRTY-THIRTY."

"KNOCK IT OFF, BURT!"

"WE'RE WITH YOU, VAL. WE'LL COME GET EVERYBODY. JUST HANG ON TIGHT."

Musical Notes

CONTINUED

DIXIE HALL, wife of Country Music Hall of Fame singer/songwriter Tom T. Hall,



died Jan. 16 at age 80 after a lengthy illness. Dixie enjoyed

a prolific career as a bluegrass and country songwriter. Her songs included "Let Me Fly Low" and "All That's Left," which Miranda Lambert recorded for her award-winning album *Platinum*.

CERTIFICATIONS

BLAKE SHELTON

received a gold certification for his No. 1 single "Neon Light,"



marking sales of 500,000 digital downloads. "Neon Light" is the first single from Blake's latest album, *Bringing Back the Sunshine*.

GARTH BROOKS was awarded a platinum

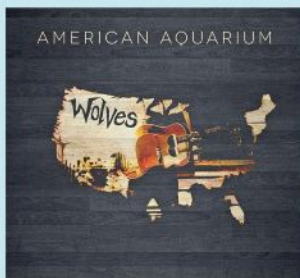


designation for his new album, *Man Against Machine*.

during his appearance on the *Today* show Jan. 8. The album has sold in excess of 1 million copies since being released this past November.

ALBUM RELEASE CALENDAR

FEBRUARY 3



AMERICAN AQUARIUM
Wolves

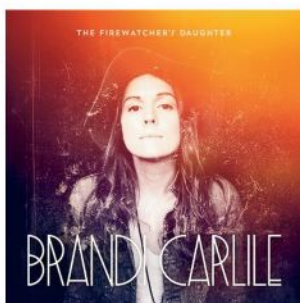
Alt-country rockers American Aquarium are hoping fans sink their teeth into *Wolves*, an album full of temptation, hunger and addiction.



TRENT DABBS
Believer

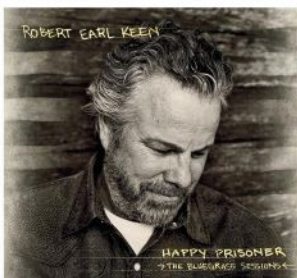


AMY SPEACE
That Kind of Girl



BRANDI CARLILE
The Firewatcher's Daughter

FEBRUARY 10



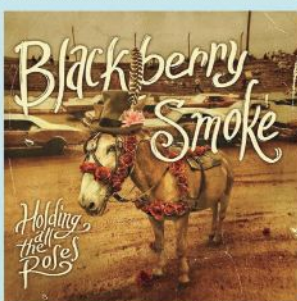
ROBERT EARL KEEN
*Happy Prisoner:
The Bluegrass Sessions*



LOVE AND THEFT
Whiskey on My Breath

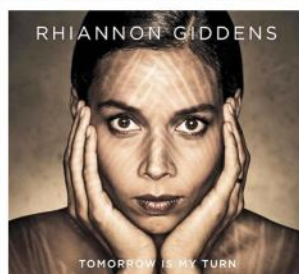


GRETCHEN PETERS
Blackbirds

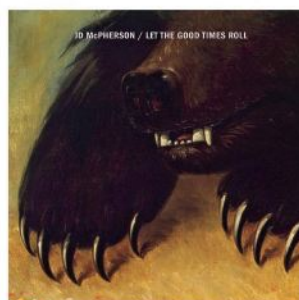


BLACKBERRY SMOKE
Holding All the Roses

Both hard-edged and laid-back, *Holding All the Roses* is an up-and-down journey that these Southern rockers are driving home on their fourth album, the first under Rounder Records.



RHIANNON GIDDENS
Tomorrow Is My Turn

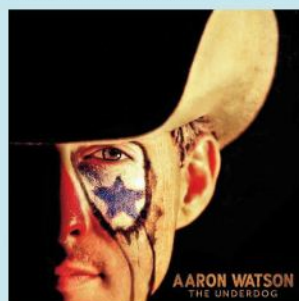


JD McPHERSON
Let the Good Times Roll

FEBRUARY 17

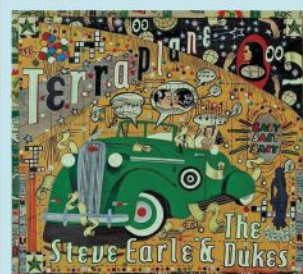


THE MAVERICKS
Mono



AARON WATSON
The Underdog

Aaron Watson is a Texas staple who has been paying his dues for more than a decade. His 12th album, *The Underdog*, is full of Lone Star power.



STEVE EARLE
Terraplane

Buckle up because *Terraplane* takes fans on a bluesy, gritty ride from alt-country's baddest of the badasses.



**SETH AVETT &
JESSICA LEA MAYFIELD**
Sing Elliott Smith

FEBRUARY 24



JAMES McMURTRY
Complicated Game

MARCH 3



ALLISON MOORER
Down to Believing



CLEARED FOR LANDING

WHEN THOMAS RHETT WAS 13 years old, his grandmother Pam introduced him to the movie *Airplane*. After one viewing, young TR immediately fell in love with the movie, especially one scene in particular. "There's a scene in the movie that went to a flashback time where they were in this club, like *Saturday Night Fever* and *Staying Alive*," Thomas Rhett explains. "I always loved it."

One day, a few years further down the road when he was in college, Thomas Rhett once again dug back into his past to revisit that particular movie. The next day, he was scheduled to write with Bart Butler and Larry McCoy, with that *Airplane* scene fresh on his mind. "When we got settled in that day, I said, 'Dude, I don't know how this

is going to work, but I have this melody that is kind of a '70s-throwback melody, and I want to try to write a country song with that melody.'"

Rather than shutting the idea down, Bart and Larry helped make the concept work with sweet, romantic lyrics about the things his girl makes him want to do when they are together. "I just remember us having so much fun coming up with the lyrics," notes Thomas Rhett. "The vibe and everything about it just felt so good for all three of us."

When "Make Me Wanna" was finished, Thomas Rhett took the song to his label-head, Scott Borchetta, in hopes of including it on his debut album on Valory Music Co. "I said that I really think the song should be on the album. I think it's different and

out of the box," Thomas Rhett recalls. "He said he would trust me on the song, even though he thought it might be too different."

Thomas Rhett got his wish, and "Make Me Wanna" was one of the 12 tracks on *It Goes Like This*. To his surprise, the song was released as the project's fifth single and marked another Top 10 hit for the rising star. "Never in a million years did I think it would ever be a single," Thomas Rhett says. "When we were thinking about what to put out [as the next single], we thought of that song, but in my head I knew that there were other songs on the album that would be a safer bet. I just wanted to go out on a limb, and I am so happy I did because everyone seems to really like it."

— ALANNA CONAWAY

"MAKE ME WANNA"

← Performed by
Thomas Rhett

→ Written by
Thomas Rhett,
Bart Butler
and Larry McCoy



PARDI TIME

In addition to his songwriting talents, Bart Butler is also a well-known producer in Nashville, having most recently worked with Jon Pardi. Not only did Bart co-produce Jon's debut album, *Write You a Song*, but he was also a co-writer on Jon's first two country radio singles, "Missin' You Crazy" and "Up All Night."

[QUESTIONS]

Jamie Lynn Spears

Jamie Lynn Spears is all grown up. The former *Zoey 101* star and little sis of pop superstar Britney Spears is now a 23-year-old mom who is singing country music as pretty as a magnolia blossom. The Louisiana native's first single from her forthcoming debut country album, *How Could I Want More?*, co-written by Jamie Lynn, is about the very grown-up subject of knowing in your heart when a relationship is just not right. *CW* spent some time chatting up Jamie Lynn and got plenty of great answers to our questions.



What is your most cherished childhood memory?

My sister took us on a surprise vacation to an island in the West Indies. The reason it was so special was because my aunt Sandra, my mom's sister, who had cancer, got to be there with us. It was the last trip we got to take as a family and we all appreciated it so much.

What's your least favorite household chore?

There are so many! But I'd have to say ironing clothes.

Name one thing you consider yourself to be very bad at.

I'm really bad at getting back to people. I'm not a phone person. If you call or text, it may be two or three days before I get back to you. It's something I need to work on.

What was the last dream you remember having?

It was about some celebrity who was at my family's Christmas and we weren't sure why they were there. It was awkward.

Whom do you respect the most and why?

My parents. You only get one set of parents.

What's your favorite social media outlet?

I like Instagram. Pictures and captions—easy, nothing confusing.

Are you a short-tempered person?

I don't get angry fast but I get annoyed fast. If I'm angry with you, I give you the silent treatment.

What's the best vacation you've ever been on?

It was the West Indies trip. I think I was 13 but I appreciated it so much.

Are you a morning person or a night owl?

I'm a night owl, but I like to get up early, so it's weird. I like the morning. I wish I could sleep through the afternoons and then wake up again for the night.

I have to ask, are you still in touch with your former castmates from *Zoey 101*?

Not on a regular basis. I live in Louisiana and I'm a mom and our lives are busy. But when we run into each other, it's like no time has passed.

— MARIA DINOIA

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COUNTRY STYLE

Leather Up

Once reserved for bad-boy motorcyclists and pilots for the protection they offer, leather jackets are now a wardrobe staple for almost everyone and come in a vast array of styles and colors. While the classic styles—like the ones worn by Miranda Lambert and Keith Urban—remain favorites, the affordability and availability of leather (as well as faux and vegan leather) make it possible to have a few trendy pieces like those worn by Reba McEntire, Kellie Pickler or Florida Georgia Line's Brian Kelley. — **TAMMY RAGUSA**



Miranda's Look

STEAL

Imitation Leather Biker Jacket
\$49.95 | hm.com



SPLURGE

Gucci Leather Biker Jacket
\$3,800 | gucci.com



Reba's Look

Drape Front Leather Jacket
\$995 | vince.com





Keith's Look

Xelement Menace Armored
Leather Motorcycle Jacket
\$179.95 | leatherup.com



Brian's Look

Scully Hand Laced Bead Trim Coat
\$289.99 | bootbarn.com



Kellie's Look

Blank NYC Natural Vegan Leather
Jacket
\$148 | zappos.com

Here's to Your Heart

A HEALTHY DIET CAN START WITH THIS TIMELY COOKBOOK FROM THE AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION.



LOOKING FOR WAYS TO improve your heart health? You can start with a heart-healthy diet, which means eating generous daily portions of fruits, vegetables and grains while cutting down on fat. There's a common misconception about healthy food, though—mainly that it's boring and lacks flavor. But once you check out the recipes in *The Go Red for Women Cookbook* from

the American Heart Association, you'll change that tune in a heartbeat.

There's no better time to start that healthy, good-for-you diet than February, designated as American Heart Month. And if you're looking for a particular date to kick off your new lifestyle, you can pick National Wear Red Day on Friday, Feb. 6. Folks nationwide are encouraged to wear red

to raise awareness of the fact that heart disease is the leading cause of death among women.

Now, check out this delicious—and definitely heart-healthy—recipe from *The Go Red for Women Cookbook*. And for more tips on preventing heart disease, visit the American Heart Association site at heart.org.

— BOB PAXMAN

Asparagus and Mushroom Soup

Serves 2; ¼ cup per serving

½ cup uncooked unseasoned brown and wild rice blend
1 tsp. olive oil
1 medium carrot, diced
1 medium rib of celery, diced
½ medium onion, diced
6 cups fat-free, low-sodium chicken broth
2 medium dried bay leaves
1½ cups thinly sliced brown (cremini) mushrooms
½ cup whole-wheat orzo
1 tsp. chopped fresh thyme or ¼ tsp. dried thyme, crumbled
½ tsp. dried marjoram, crumbled
¼ tsp. pepper

6 to 8 medium asparagus spears, diced (1½ cups)
2 tbsp. plus 1 tsp. finely chopped hazelnuts, dry-roasted
2 tbsp. plus 1 tsp. chopped sweetened dried cranberries

PREPARE the rice using the package directions, omitting the salt and margarine. Set aside.

About 15 minutes before the rice is done, in a large saucepan, **HEAT** the oil over medium-high heat, swirling to coat the bottom. **COOK** the carrot, celery and onion for 3 to 5 minutes, or until the vegetables are soft and begin to release their juices.

STIR in the broth and bay

leaves. Bring to a boil. Stir in the mushrooms, orzo, thyme, marjoram and pepper. Reduce the heat and **SIMMER**, covered, for 10 minutes (no stirring needed).

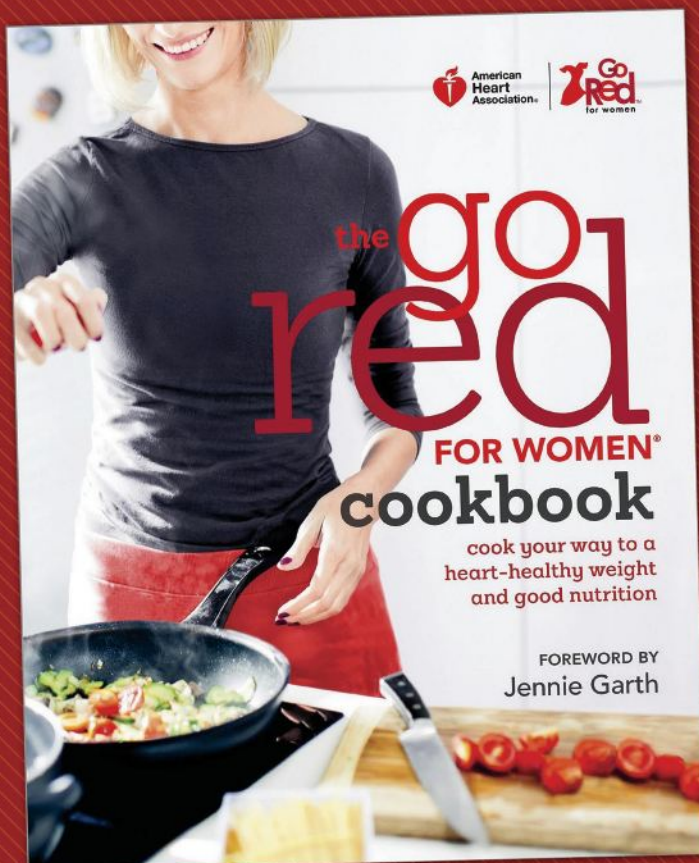
STIR in the asparagus. Simmer, covered, for 5 to 7 minutes, or until the asparagus is tender.

Stir in the rice. **COOK** for 1 minute, or until heated through. Discard the bay leaves.

LADLE the soup into bowls. **SPRINKLE** with the hazelnuts and cranberries.

Cook's Tip: If you can't find a brown and wild rice blend, you can make your own by combining 1 cup of brown rice with ¼ cup of wild rice.

SERVE with kale salad with citrus dressing from *The Go Red for Women Cookbook* for a complete meal.



NUTRITION ANALYSIS

(per serving)

for asparagus and mushroom soup:

Calories.....	107
Total Fat.....	2.5g
Saturated fat.....	0.5g
Trans fat.....	0.0g
Polyunsaturated fat.....	0.5g
Monounsaturated fat.....	1.5g
Cholesterol.....	0mg
Sodium.....	58mg
Carbohydrates.....	17g
Fiber.....	3g
Sugars.....	4g
Protein.....	5g
Dietary exchanges.....	1 starch

This recipe is reprinted with permission from American Heart Association *The Go Red for Women Cookbook*, copyright © 2013 by the American Heart Association. Published by Clarkson Potter/Publishers, a division of Random House, Inc. Available from booksellers everywhere.

A sepia-toned photograph of a man with short, light-colored hair and a slight beard, looking down and to the side. He is wearing a dark shirt and a thin chain necklace. His right hand is resting on his head. The background shows the interior of a car, with the window frame and door visible. Overlaid on the image is the text 'A NEW MAN' in large, white, outlined, sans-serif capital letters.

A NEW MAN

**BILLY GILMAN IS STILL THE COUNTRY
SINGER YOU REMEMBER, BUT HE'S NOT
AFRAID TO BE HIMSELF ANYMORE.**

STORY BY JON FREEMAN



When Billy Gilman was a kid, his dream was to be a country singer. He loved Pam Tillis and dreamed of one day performing on the Grand Ole Opry.

He even got to live out that dream when, as a 12-year-old, his angelic voice and quality songs on the album *One Voice* made the Rhode Island native a sensation. He made his Grand Ole Opry debut shortly after.

Now a young man of 26, Billy is still obsessed with being a country artist and performing. He still loves the Grand Ole Opry. Not much has changed.

Except now we are all aware that Billy is gay.

"People have been wondering for a long time, even before I knew, really," he says, laughing, on a call from his home state. "So it was time to address it and hopefully make a stand and know that it's OK."

2014 may well be remembered as the year country music came out of the closet. Early on, Kacey Musgraves sang about equality and personal freedom in her song "Follow Your Arrow," nabbing an armful of awards along the way. Then in one busy country news day in November, both Billy and Ty Herndon revealed

their sexual orientation, putting rumors to rest and embracing their lives openly.

For Billy's part, it was a daunting prospect. He had at least begun to come out around his hometown and started seeing someone. But there were rumors and Billy was concerned that his fans might hear it from some other source. When he came out to his team, they informed him they had been trying to address those rumors for some time. They told him it was time to be honest.

"I was scared because I don't think country knows the love I have for country," he explains. "I grew up listening to it literally since birth. When I first went on the Opry, it's amazing how emotional I was at 12 years old, just because it's been in my blood."

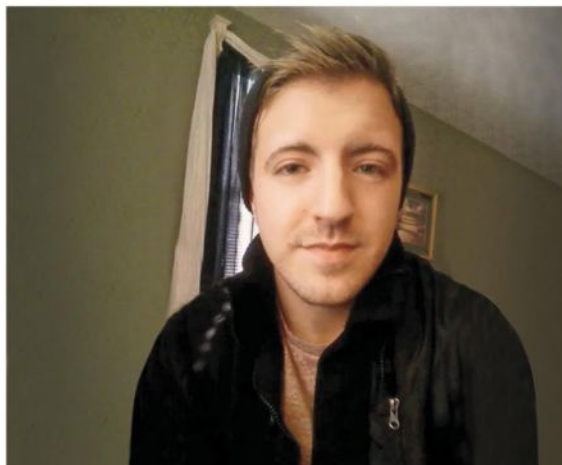
Essentially, he stood to lose everything that mattered to him. But not talking about it would mean wearing a mask for the public, for his fans, and in a genre like country music that places such a premium on authenticity. Billy contends that being in a relationship may have helped push him to come out publicly, and in this case his fans rallied when he posted a video message online with the announcement along with a tease of the video for his new single, "Say You Will."

"My fans are my fans, people are people, and I've always been blessed with a very strong fan base that supported me through whatever," he says. "And I know that I've advocated for so much in my life that now it was time, good or bad, that I became an advocate for myself."

That was harder than it sounds, particularly when Billy had lived much of life being, in his words, "a pleaser," he

acknowledges. "I wanted to make sure my band was happy, I wanted to make sure my fans were happy. So I just never wanted to disrespect anyone."

In his video revealing the news, Billy talked about the trepidation he felt about going forward with it. Not, he



In a nearly six-minute YouTube video in November, Billy spoke to his fans and publicly came out as gay.

BILLY GILMAN CONTINUED

explained, because he was ashamed of himself, but for totally external, business-related reasons. “It’s pretty silly to know that I’m ashamed of doing this, knowing that because I’m in a genre, and in an industry, that is ashamed of me for being me.”

It’s unclear if he means the industry itself, which is largely socially liberal, or if he’s referring to the more socially conservative fan base of country music. In reality, it’s probably both. Billy cites the difficulty he had getting meetings before he made his announcement as evidence that Nashville executives were skittish about working with him. “I always wondered, well, maybe I’m just not good enough anymore, maybe it’s just over with,” he says, sighing.

And while risk-averse Nashville labels may have shut their doors to Billy, in fairness, there is also the possibility that his new music wasn’t undeniable enough to trump some of the inevitable pushback. Whatever the case, Billy is aware that being an out-of-the-closet gay man in country music carries a stigma, but says he doesn’t understand why it’s such a tough sell for many fans.

“If I handle my private life with respect, there’s nothing that will be . . . it will only be about the music, where that [part of my life] wouldn’t become a focal point,” he says. “It’s my life and it wouldn’t be even if I was straight. My private life is my private life.”

“Respect” is a word Billy uses often, as a way of saying he’s not out to offend or upset anyone by revealing this part of his life. He refers to an old song of his from his major-label days called “Shades of Life” and its message of inclusion as one he aspires to live every day.

“I am one to respect all and some people may not and that’s OK,” he says. “They have their own convictions and you have to respect that, but I’m not basing my career on a reality show where people [are] seeing it constantly. I’m just singing my songs.”

Undoubtedly, there will be (and already are) people who don’t understand this part of Billy’s life. He says he’s even gotten some crazy messages

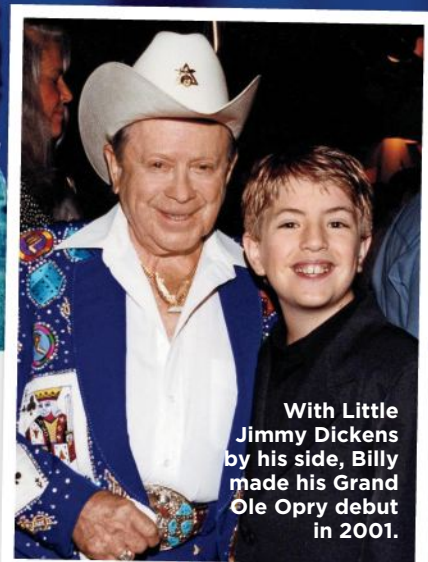


“I’M STILL GONNA BE ME AND LIVE MY LIFE BECAUSE THERE’S GONNA BE PEOPLE THAT DO UNDERSTAND AND DO RESPECT ME.”

through social media, but most everyone has been supportive and eager to see what he does with “Say You Will” and anything after. He hopes that seeing one another as humans first may be the key to putting differences aside.

“I have the most conservative father you would ever want to know,” he says. “Even being from the North, he goes to the gun club and all of this, it’s very country. So it was a scary thing and he has been nothing but accepting, because you handle it with respect. In regard to people who don’t understand, you know, simply, it’s OK that you don’t. I’m still gonna be me and live my life because there’s gonna be people that do understand and do respect me. And it shouldn’t take away from my humanity, you know what I mean? It shouldn’t take away from anyone’s placement in this world.”

That’s a message that seems to be



With Little Jimmy Dickens by his side, Billy made his Grand Ole Opry debut in 2001.

reverberating through Billy’s corner of the world. Following his announcement in November, he got a flood of e-mails in response, most of which were very supportive. What struck Billy—who is quick to say he came out for himself—was the amount of correspondence from young people who had been scared and confused like him and felt encouraged by his announcement.

“They said, ‘Thank you for allowing me to know that I’m not alone, that it’s OK. I have not heard of a young artist coming forth like this. I have someone that I can look up to,’” he recalls. “That was the most amazing thing.” **CW**



McBRIDE'S RIDE

**MARTINA
TAKES ON
A NEW LABEL
AND NEW
MUSIC AS
SHE BEGINS
HER NEXT
CHAPTER**



**16
Extra
Pages!**

**CHRIS
YOUNG'S
BIG
ANNOUNCEMENT**

**MADDIE
& TAE
CHECK
YES OR NO**

**STUDIO 615
WITH
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**NASH
NIGHTS
LIVE'S
SHAWN PARR
HITS THE
GOLDEN
GLOBES**



FOREVER YOUNG

2015 IS SHAPING UP TO BE CHRIS YOUNG'S BEST YEAR YET.

STORY BY TAMMY RAGUSA

THINGS KEEP getting better and better for Chris Young. In the eight years since his first single, "Drinkin' Me Lonely," the handsome, affable and talented young country artist has earned a reputation as one of the finest male vocalists in the format, amassed a respectable collection of hits and developed a fan following so loyal they even befriend his mother on the socials. And before he hits the road for a headlining tour throughout Australia and Europe, he and another of the best voices in country music, Lee Brice, have embarked on a co-headlining tour with Brothers Osborne.

That's a whole lot of manly testosterone on one tour, and Chris laughs when we hint that the handsome lot of fellas might need extra security because of the women who will attend the shows. "The good news is me and Lee are both guys that I don't think the

two of us walking around are going to worry about getting jumped," he says. He is, of course, referring to the fact that he and Lee both bear the physiques of starters in the NFL. But there's no mistaking the appeal. Chris has been voted *Country Weekly's* "Sexiest Man" three times. Standing well over 6 feet tall, with broad shoulders and a smile that lights up the room, you'd almost mistake him for a Hollywood movie star. But the laid-back, unassuming country star bashfully brushes the compliments

aside and focuses on the year ahead.

"Lee and I have known each other for a long, long time and I was kind of looking around and it was like, well, I've done this tour and I've done this tour, I really want to do something that is a little bit different, stands out," he explains during an early call to the *Country Weekly* offices, prior to the launch of his co-headlining tour with Lee. "And I said, 'Dude, we ought to do some shows together.' This was back when we were on tour with Brad Paisley together. I have such a great amount of respect for him. We're doing a true co-headline where one of us closes one night and one of us closes the next night and we'll flip-flop back and forth. As long as I've known him, as much as I like his music, as much as I like him and know all of his band, all of his band knows my band, I think [the tour is] going to be pretty seamless."

Since we spoke with Chris, the tour started and is in full swing, and



CHRIS YOUNG'S GREATEST SIDES

In our singles-driven society, “album sides,” or those tunes that don’t get radio airplay, are often forgotten or never heard. But there are so many great tunes that don’t get radio airplay that we created an album of Chris’ best sides, and, no, they aren’t all ballads.

Chris and his band surprise fans at the MLB Fan Cave Concert Series.

1. “Hold You to It” (from *A.M.*)
 2. “Text Me Texas” (from *A.M.*)
 3. “Lost” (from *Neon*)
 4. “Save Water, Drink Beer” (from *Neon*)
 5. “When She’s On” (from *Neon*)
 6. “She’s Got This Thing About Her” (from *Neon*)
 7. “That Makes Me” (from *The Man I Want to Be*)
 8. “It Takes a Man” (from *The Man I Want to Be*)
 9. “Lay It On Me” (from *Chris Young*)
 10. “Who’s Gonna Take Me Home” (from *Chris Young*)
- BONUS TRACK:** “Rainy Night in Georgia” (from *The Man I Want to Be*)



CHRIS YOUNG CONTINUED

we notice that two of the stops are in Hawaii, a destination that isn’t often on tours because of the difficulty and expense in transporting bands, equipment and gear. But Chris assures us that the islanders won’t get a compromised show. “We’re doing those full band and it works for me because it breaks up my flight to Australia,” he says. “Once I’ve played in Hawaii, the only state I will have never played in is Alaska. I had an offer to play it last year and if I had missed one flight on the way up or back, I would have missed a show. I do not like to do that ever. I hate flying day of show because what if something beyond your control happens and you miss the show.”

Being conscientious, being aware and being grateful is part of what has made Chris a country music favorite and



aided in his steady rise in the business. It’s also what keeps him focused and setting new goals for himself. “I think if you’re content and satisfied,” he says, elaborating, “that means you don’t have any other goals you’re trying to reach,

so I wouldn’t say I’m content or satisfied. But I would say really, really happy with what’s going on. I’m loving what ‘Lonely Eyes’ is doing. I’ve been really, really proud of this record and everything that’s going on here. I’m going to Australia this year, I’m going to Europe this year, headlining!” He pauses as if to let the significance of “headlining” sink in for himself as much as us. “For two and a half weeks in Europe I’m going to be the guy whose name is on the ticket.” He stops to catch his breath, but you can hear him smile over the phone when he continues. “Yeah, I’m really, really happy about everything that’s going on. Now, do I want to keep improving upon all of that stuff and do I have more dreams and more goals? Absolutely, but right now I can’t complain about anything.”

We can complain, though—that we don’t get enough Chris Young. **N**

CONNECT WITH THE PASSION OF COUNTRY

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COUNTRY FOR LIFE



INDEPENDENCE DAYS

THANKS TO A NEW RECORD
DEAL WITH NASH ICON,
MARTINA McBRIDE HAS
FOUND THE FREEDOM TO
MAKE MUSIC HER WAY.

STORY BY ANDREW LEAHEY

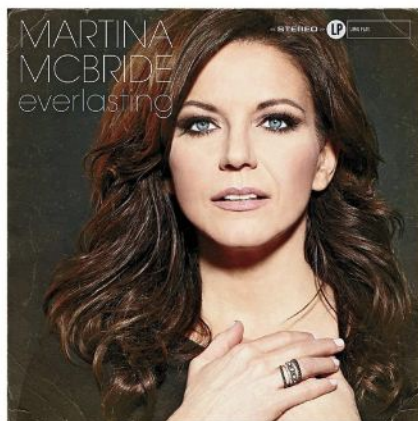
ONE YEAR AGO, Martina McBride found herself in an unfamiliar position. After working with major record labels for more than two decades, the singer decided to branch out and form her own label. Suddenly, Martina was an indie musician who could record new material whenever and wherever she wanted.

It was a thrilling change. Martina made the most of it, recording *Everlasting*—a collection of old-school R&B songs originally performed by Sam Cooke, Aretha Franklin and other soul legends—on her own dime. The album was released independently last spring. Surprisingly, it climbed to the top of the country charts, something no independent album by a female artist had ever done before.

Less than 12 months later, Martina is back in the major leagues, thanks to a new record deal with Nash Icon Music. But that doesn't mean she's done exploring new territory.

NASH Icon Music is a collaboration

between the executives at Big Machine Records, whose clients include Taylor Swift and Tim McGraw, and the radio broadcasters at Cumulus Media. When the new label launched in late 2014, its goal was to focus on active country

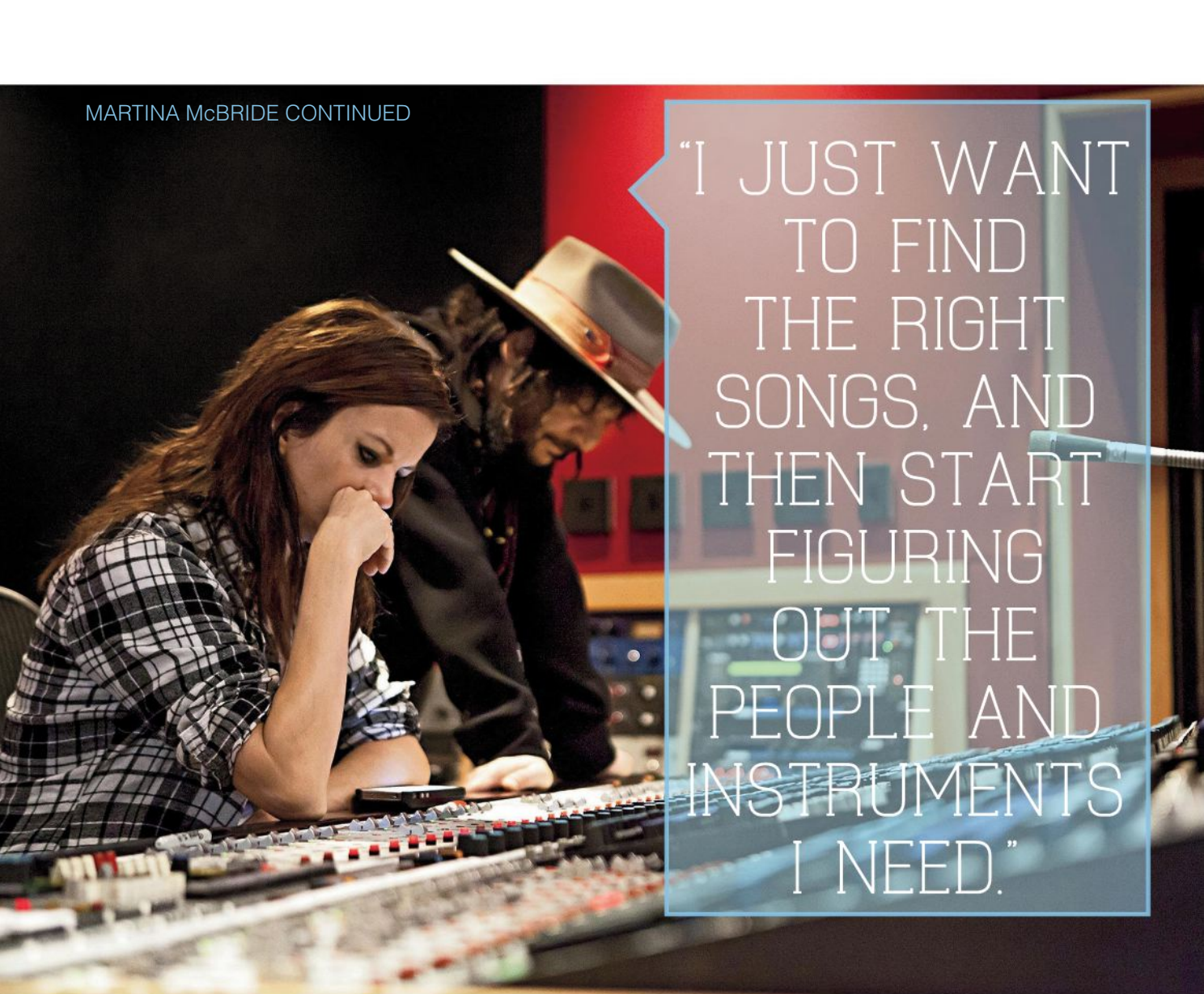


stars who enjoyed success during the 1990s and early 2000s. Martina was a perfect fit, as were her two rostermates: Ronnie Dunn and Reba McEntire.

"Before Nash Icon came along, I had

almost resigned myself—in a good way—to the idea of spending the next part of my career making whatever kind of records I wanted to make, outside of the commercial country thing," Martina says during a winter afternoon at Blackbird Studio, the award-winning Nashville studio that she launched with her husband, John, in 2002. "I would've been fine just making records for me and my fans, but this opportunity came along, and it seemed like the best of both worlds. I'll have a lot of freedom to make the music I want to make, and it's going to be great for my fans to be able to hear it on the radio again."

That's one thing that was missing from *Everlasting's* success story: a genuine radio hit. Martina, who released her first Top 10 single in 1993, is the kind of legacy artist who's built for the FM dial, with a supersized voice that soars, swoons and sweeps. She's also a four-time winner of the CMA Female Vocalist of the Year award, with

A photograph of Martina McBride in a recording studio. She is sitting at a large mixing console, looking down at a smartphone in her hand. She is wearing a plaid shirt. In the background, another person wearing a hat is partially visible. The studio has various pieces of equipment and a red wall in the background.

"I JUST WANT TO FIND THE RIGHT SONGS, AND THEN START FIGURING OUT THE PEOPLE AND INSTRUMENTS I NEED."

more than 30 Top 20 hits under her belt. Radio is in her DNA.

The fact that *Everlasting* was able to top the charts without any radio support, though, is a testament to the support of Martina's fans.

"We had no idea what to expect when we released that album," she admits. "There was no radio airplay. There wasn't any real single to drive awareness. It was a nice surprise to see how well it did, and I think I owe that to my fans. I never underestimated them, but it was really great to see that when you take away the machine—the smoke and mirrors—people can still gravitate toward something you've released. The fans and I have a stronger connection because of that record. They're feeling very supportive of me, and I'm feeling

very appreciative of them."

Nowhere is that support more evident than on the road. Martina kick-started her Everlasting Tour in May 2014, bringing along a large, 11-piece backup band for the ride. She dressed her four horn players in matching suits and worked on some choreographed dance moves with her three harmony singers, all of whom also wear coordinated outfits onstage. It's a visual spectacle as well as a musical experience, and the sheer amount of people onstage has given Martina the chance to recreate some of the more layered arrangements from *Everlasting*—like the harmonized hooks in The Supremes' "Come See About Me"—without leaving out anything important. Her fans have loved the shows, with some showing up to more than 10

different performances.

True to its name, the Everlasting Tour recently received an extension and will now stretch all the way until October. Martina says she's having too much fun to pull the plug just yet. At the same time, she's also started thinking about her debut album for Nash Icon Music, which she'll begin recording in April.

"I want the new album to be raw, real and really organic," she says, "but I don't want to go into the process with any restrictions. If I say, 'Well, maybe I'll keep the horn section for the album,' then I'll start looking only for songs that require horns. I just want to find the right songs, and then start figuring out the people and instruments I need. It might be a longer process to do it that way, but it's fun. Instead of putting any restrictions



Martina a four-time CMA Female Vocalist of the Year winner, spent much of 2014 touring behind her *Everlasting* album and revealed her new deal to Jenna Bush Hager on NBC's *Today*. (Opposite) Martina and producer Don Was work on *Everlasting*.



Martina picked up a CMA award for Female Vocalist in 2004.



on it, you can start with this blank canvas and then watch it come to life.”

On the first season of ABC’s prime-time TV series *Nashville*, Rayna Jaymes—a fictional country singer whose success somewhat mirrors Martina’s own—buts heads with her record label, whose executives want her to sound younger and poppier. Martina says that’s not the way Nash Icon works. Besides, topping the charts in 2014 as an independent artist has given her quite a bit of leverage . . . not that she needs it.

“I haven’t been put in a position where I’d need to use that leverage,” she explains. “I’ve been really lucky; I’ve always had really good record deals. I do feel like I’m coming to Nash Icon with something to bring to the table, though, so I think the partnership

is going to be good for both of us.”

When asked why she has such faith in a brand-new record label, Martina talks about two specific people: Scott Borchetta, who founded Big Machine before spearheading Nash Icon’s launch, and the label’s general manager, Jim Weatherson.

“Scott has a lot of passion for the music, the business, the artists,” she says of Borchetta, whose résumé also includes the discovery of Taylor Swift. “You really feel that when you work with him. It’s contagious. Also, he thinks out of the box. He has a creative way of getting things done, and he’s smart. Put all those things together, and you can really make some stuff happen.”

Meanwhile, it was Weatherson who helped convince Martina to shelve her

independence—but not her independent spirit—and return to the world of big-budget labels.

“Before I joined the roster,” Martina remembers, “I asked Jim, ‘If we were to sign this deal, when would you want the record to be finished?’ And he said, ‘Well, when the music’s finished.’ I’ve never heard a label head say that before! It’s just a different way of approaching the whole thing. It seems more musical, doesn’t it?”

It does. Martina is currently planning on releasing her new record this fall, right around the time the *Everlasting* Tour winds to a close. It’ll be the newest chapter in a book that’s nowhere close to ending. If things go as well as *Everlasting*, some of the best parts might be just around the corner. **N**



The Golden Ticket

SILENCE IS NOT GOLDEN FOR SHAWN, THE VOICE OF THE GOLDEN GLOBES.

As awards-show season continues, the Golden Globes in January were one of the best ever. I have been blessed to be the voice of the Globes for the last 24 years, and over those years I have walked the red carpet with some of country music's best. Tim McGraw and Faith Hill have made the stroll a time or two, and let's not forget how many times Keith Urban has been there to support his beautiful wife, Nicole Kidman.

This year would be the last for Tina Fey and Amy Poehler as hosts, and they left us all wanting more. They kicked off the show with a nine-minute opening monologue that had everyone in stitches and kept things moving for the rest of the night. Some of the highlights included an emotional George Clooney accepting the Cecil B. DeMille Award and Gina Rodriguez winning the first-ever Golden Globe for the CW network for her role in *Jane the Virgin*. We used her acceptance speech on *Nash Nights Live* as our Inspiration of the Night because she inspired so many with her words: "Thank you, Mom and Dad, for telling me to dream big and to never stop dreaming." But what really had me choked



Shawn and Keith Urban looking dapper on the red carpet

up as a dad to a beautiful daughter myself is when she said, "My father used to tell me to get up every day and say, 'Today is going to be a good day. I can and I will.' Well, Dad, today's going to be a great day because I can and I did." Another great moment was when I introduced pop singer Prince and the crowd went crazy! You would have thought Elvis was in the building. It was an unbelievable night.

The Grammys and Oscars are around the corner, but the next big journey I am proud take you on will be the 50th annual Academy of Country Music Awards in April. I will be celebrating 25 years as the voice of that show, and we are moving it to Dallas, Texas. They say everything is bigger in Texas, and this show has all the ingredients to be the biggest and best ever. God bless.



Shawn Parr, a nationally recognized disc jockey and television announcer, is host of **NASH NIGHTS LIVE WITH SHAWN PARR**, airing nightly from 7 p.m. to midnight/ET on stations throughout the country.

NASH | ON the SCENE

OUT AND ABOUT WITH YOUR FAVORITE STARS!



It's not often that Reba McEntire gets out-cuted, but her granddaughter River Rose wins this round.



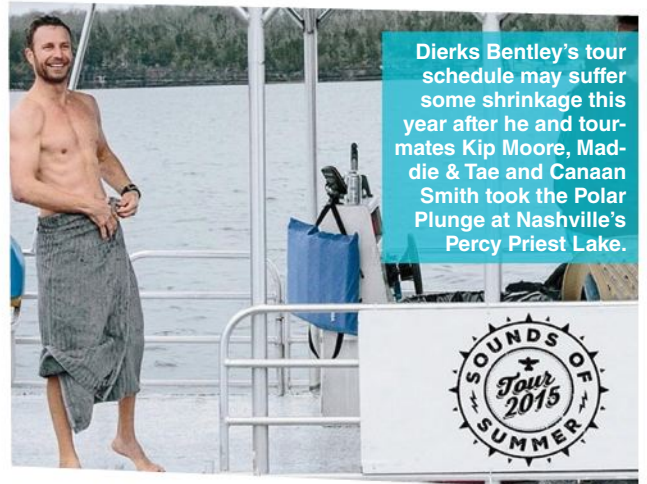
Miranda Lambert has a fever, and the only prescription is more pink cowbell.



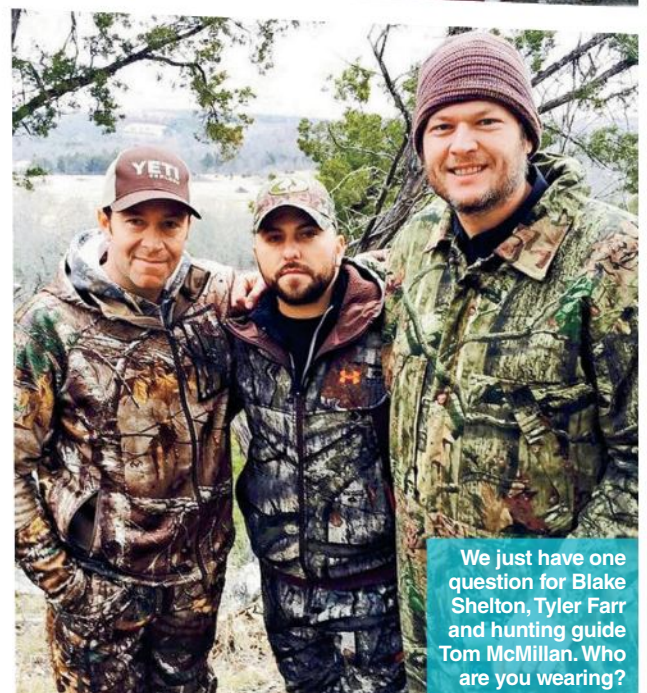
FGL's Tyler Hubbard and Brian Kelley bring a smile to the faces of families at Ronald McDonald House.



It's a colorless world without country music in their lives, but somehow Jack Antonoff and Taylor Swift find joy.



Dierks Bentley's tour schedule may suffer some shrinkage this year after he and tour-mates Kip Moore, Maddy & Tae and Canaan Smith took the Polar Plunge at Nashville's Percy Priest Lake.



We just have one question for Blake Shelton, Tyler Farr and hunting guide Tom McMillan. Who are you wearing?

LOCASH

WHO

Preston Brust, Chris Lucas

WHEN

Jan. 12, 2015

SONGS PERFORMED"Love Drunk," "You Gonna Fly,"
"Shipwrecked," "I Love This Life"**NASH FAVORITE**

"I Love This Life"

**WHAT'S NEW**

The band recently signed a new record deal with Reviver Records and changed their name from LoCash Cowboys to simply LOCASH.

SHOWTIME

In addition to "Love Drunk," a tune found on their debut album, LOCASH performed the Keith Urban No. 1 hit "You Gonna Fly," which they penned, as well as two new songs, "Shipwrecked" and their forthcoming single, "I Love This Life," which hits country radio on Feb. 23.

FEEDBACK

PRESTON: Since our performance was acoustic, we didn't have our drummer with us, so I got to stompin' and keepin' the beat. I guess I was rockin' a little too hard and broke the stool I was sitting on . . . so let's just hope I don't get an invoice from *Country Weekly*.

CHRIS: It was great to actually meet, shake the hands and genuinely thank the people who write the stories at *Country Weekly* and *NASH*. It's always great to get face to face with real people who care about country music and who care about our career and music. It's nice to stop in the office, bring food and wine, sing some new songs and actually see the pen and paper these stories are written on.

ENCORE

Keep an eye out for LOCASH's new wine, Shipwrecked, which will be on shelves in April.

Chris (left) and Preston try to decide who's the sharp-dressed man of the duo.



PHOTOS COURTESY NASH TV



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NASH | Check YES or NO



Maddie Marlow (left) and Tae Dye

Maddie & Tae

Check out Maddie & Tae on the red carpet of the CMA Awards as we ask them to check yes or no on our list of random questions.

Ever picked up a guy in a bar?

Maddie: YES ☐ NO ☒
Tae: YES ☐ NO ☒

Ever run out of gas?

Maddie: YES ☐ NO ☒
Tae: YES ☐ NO ☒

Do you sing in the shower?

Maddie: YES ☐ NO ☒
Tae: YES ☒ NO ☐

If I gave you an iguana, would you keep it?

Maddie: YES ☐ NO ☒
Tae: YES ☒ NO ☐

Do you like root beer?

Maddie: YES ☒ NO ☐
Tae: YES ☒ NO ☐

Ever done anything you regret?

Maddie: YES ☒ NO ☐
Tae: YES ☒ NO ☐

Do you drink milk or juice right out of the carton?

Maddie: YES ☒ NO ☐
Tae: YES ☐ NO ☒

Ever wear pajamas to the grocery store?

Maddie: YES ☒ NO ☐
Tae: YES ☐ NO ☒

Do you eat the crust?

Maddie: YES ☐ NO ☒
Tae: YES ☒ NO ☐

Ever play hookie?

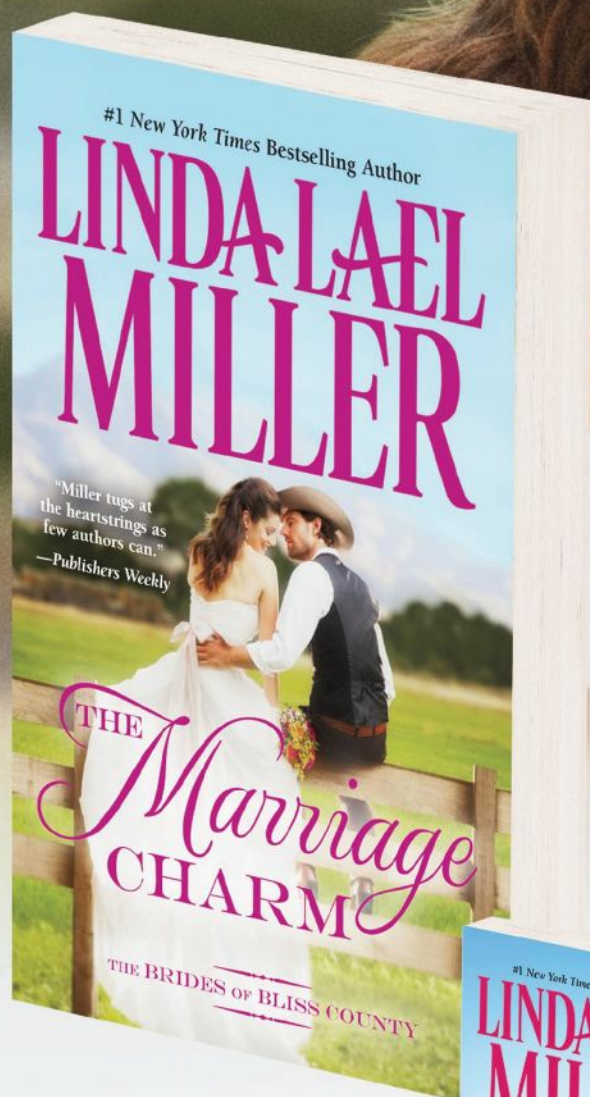
Maddie: YES ☒ NO ☐
Tae: YES ☒ NO ☐

Do you wish this was over?

Maddie: YES ☐ NO ☒
Tae: YES ☐ NO ☒

The women of
Bliss County have a pact—
to find husbands.

The right husbands.

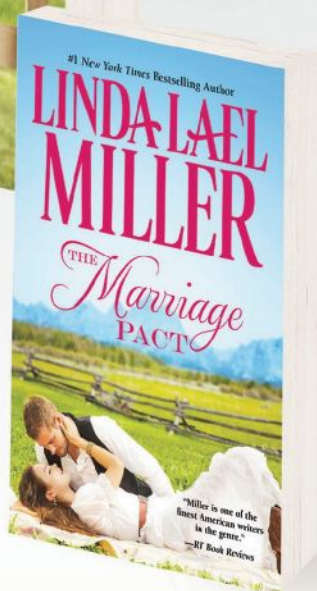


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finest American writers
in the genre."

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NASH | SOUND BITES

WHAT YOUR FAVORITE
STARS ARE SAYING ON
NASH-FM

The last two years have been crazy. The last couple of years I've just been very fortunate. I'm excited about 2015.

BRETT ELDRIDGE

We debuted 32 Bridge with Cabela's, and it's kind of outdoor-influenced.

LUKE BRYAN

on his new clothing line

There's just not many things left like that, I think, in our society today, and I think it's important to keep those things alive.

JIMI WESTBROOK

of Little Big Town on what the Opry means to him

I remember last year, before I signed my artist deal, looking at the girls who were a part of that and just thinking, "I want to be a part of that group," because it's such an awesome, inspiring group of girls.

KELSEA BALLERINI

on being named as one of the Next Women of Country by CMT

It's just been fun, over the past couple of months, to be able to play a couple new songs off the new record, and looking forward to a second album release.

THOMAS RHETT

I said many times that they're the holy grail for a musician as far as awards go. They are truly the one award where it's OK just to be nominated.

ERIC CHURCH

on the Grammy Awards

AMERICA'S MORNING SHOW
WITH **BLAIR GARNER**

KICKIN' IT
WITH **KIX BROOKS**

**MUSIC CITY
HOT SPOTS**



TENNESSEE STATE MUSEUM

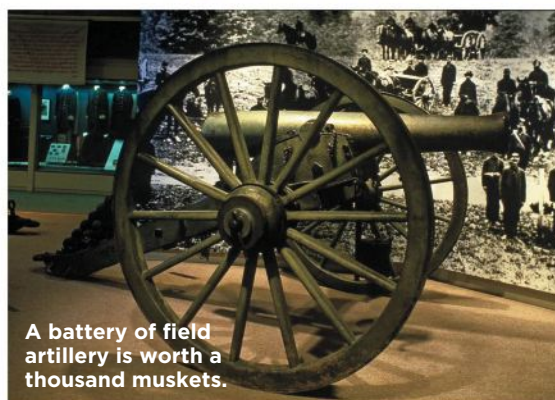
It may be known as Music City U.S.A., but Nashville also hosts the collective history of the great state of Tennessee in the Tennessee State Museum. And there is so much more involved than country music and its roots. The Tennessee State Museum can answer all of your questions about the Volunteer State, including why it's called the Volunteer State and its evolution. Permanent exhibits include displays that detail the stories of the Native American cultures that inhabited the state, the pioneers that settled it and the soldiers who fought for it during the Civil War. The museum also features a stunning Antebellum portrait display and collection that shines a spotlight on that period's development and a fascinating walk through the New South, including exhibits on women's suffrage, Prohibition and the other social and political issues of the time. In addition, the Tennessee State Museum welcomes changing and traveling exhibitions that cast even more light on the story of Tennessee, its people and its culture.

Guided tours are available at the Tennessee State Museum and schools are encouraged to make the museum one of their annual field trips. Don't forget to visit the gift shop for collectibles and memorabilia from your visit.

— TAMMY RAGUSA



Oh, mummy!



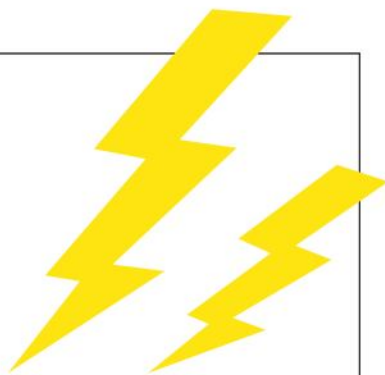
A battery of field artillery is worth a thousand muskets.

LOCATION:
505 Deaderick Street
Nashville, TN
37243
tnmuseum.org

HOURS:
Tuesday-Saturday:
10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Sunday:
1 p.m.-5 p.m.
Closed holidays



STORM TROOPER



BRAD PAISLEY may not have the Force, but he's still building his own little empire in country music.

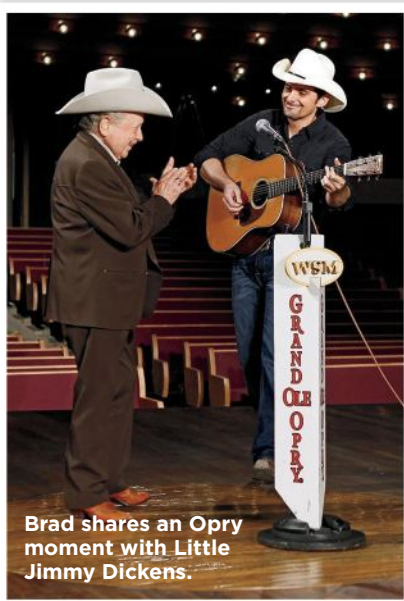
**STORY BY
MELINDA
NEWMAN**

Brad Paisley has no complaints about 2015. He started the year by landing his 19th No. 1 on *Billboard's* Country Airplay chart with "Perfect Storm," the second single from his current album, *Moonshine in the Trunk*. The tally puts him in seventh place among country artists who have released singles in the past 25 years, a statistic

he admits he can't get his head around—not that he has much time to contemplate such things anyway. Brad is in the midst of the last leg of the Country Nation World Tour and he's already hard at work planning his 2015 summer tour. Taking a hint from his upcoming single, he has plans to be "Crushin' It" all year long.

It's been a few weeks since your good friend Little Jimmy Dickens died. How are you feeling?

I feel fine. I'll miss him incredibly, but his passing is a triumph in every way. He mastered the art of life in a way that I hadn't hardly seen anybody ever do. He played the Opry on December 20. He was surrounded by his family when he passed. They had a party for him a week or so before that for this birthday and he was rip-roaring. At the party were a lot of Opry members and we got up and told what he meant to us. He talked about how wonderful his life has been. He seemed fine, we didn't think we were needing to do that because of anything.



Brad shares an Opry moment with Little Jimmy Dickens.

By putting him in your videos, you helped introduce him to a younger generation. That must mean a lot to you.

It does. Jimmy and [Jimmy's wife] Mona had repeatedly said to me over the years, "You're really responsible for a lot of people knowing who he is who wouldn't know." It helped him stay relevant and do some really fun things, but I'm the one who got to have the blessing there because I got to know him better than almost anybody from my generation and he became a member of my family, really.

What can today's artists learn from him?

I really believe to not take

BRAD PAISLEY CONTINUED

yourself so seriously and be willing to have fun. He was the guy some goofball hosting the CMA Awards would say, "We're going to dress you up as Justin Bieber." You can either say, "I deserve more dignity," or "That sounds like a blast." This man thought it sounded like a blast and he loved it. Anytime he made someone laugh he was happy. That's such a lesson in life.

Switching tracks, "Perfect Storm" is your first No. 1 on *Billboard's* Country Airplay chart in three years. That's a great way to start the new year.

It feels great. It's fun to come back from the break and see it sitting there. I really am realizing how important that is to the people around me, more so than even me. It's so great for the people who produce and play on these songs. Lee Miller wrote that with me. For me, an artist, there's always this thinking of, "Well, we'll get them next time," if you don't get it. But for a songwriter, they have a single and [don't] have one for a while, so every time one of these misses, it's a much harder thing to swallow for the people who work on them.

How did your wife, Kim, respond the first time she heard the song?

She had some notes [*laughs*]. She said, "Am I really angry that much?" I'm like, "You didn't hear that part where I said you're pretty." She's like, "Yeah, I heard that." She's like, "You are right. You do know how to make me mad at you." [*Laughs*] I think I might have done it with this song. No, she really did like it. It's funny the discussions you have when you make your living singing songs and there's somebody who's driving around thinking everybody thinks that's them. But, truthfully, that isn't the way people do this. They think of themselves when they hear a song. I can call the song "Specifically Just for My Wife," and people will go, "I love this," and take it home to their husband and say, "This is your song for me."



Brad has a way of making his wife, Kimberly Williams-Paisley, mad, but he can also make her laugh.



Brad kicked off the second leg of his Country Nation World Tour on Jan. 17.

Why do you think it resonated at radio so much?

We were really careful to make sure the things we were talking about were universal truths about women in general. “Single-barreled bourbon on ice,” to me, is a really good analogy for most women, which is smooth with a kick, a chill and a burn, all at the same time. I have yet to meet a woman who doesn’t have all those things. I think it’s a really unique-sounding song melodically that fits what we were going for with the power of it. It’s also not sappy feeling, which I like.

It’s been 16 years since your debut single. Where you do feel you are in your career?

I feel like I’ve got a lot left to do, but I see it as a songwriter more than I see it as an artist. For me, it’s not about

how many more No. 1s I can get or anything. For me, it’s more about what do I have to say? Where do I go from here? What’s the next fun thing? What’s the next serious thing? Thankfully, right now we’re in the middle of an album. We just finished the second single off of it and we’ll get to the third. I’d like to do six off of here. I haven’t even begun cutting another record yet because there’s plenty on here.

The third single is “Crushin’ It,” which humorously proves that everybody is good at something.

Yep. On a weekend when I’m standing on that stage, it’s painfully obvious there’s one thing that these people are really good at to me, and it is partying [laughs]. You’re singing the songs at an amphitheater or an arena and some of them are just

having the time of their lives. I’ll make my way to the back to the B stage—to the lawn seats or the arena for this other part of the show—and do acoustic songs near the drunk section and they’re facing the wrong direction and some of them are possibly working on having kids, you know what I’m saying? [Laughs]

How did the song come about?

I had come back from a trip and [co-writers Kelley Lovelace and Lee Miller came] over. I said, “‘Crushin’ It’—it’s a metaphor for ‘I’m doing great at this; I’ll be crushin’ it,’ but basically the song is about how you don’t feel like you’re good at anything or, at least, you haven’t had the best week, but by Friday I’ll be finishing my third beer and I’ll be crushing it then.” They said, “Holy cow. Why hasn’t that been done?”

Brad has co-hosted the Country Music Association Awards with Carrie Underwood seven times.



BRAD PAISLEY CONTINUED

Is the song already getting a good response live?

I played it in Montreal, the last date of 2014. It's really rare when you play something new that they're not just staring at their watch and going, "Play 'Ticks,' please." It just worked really well already. There was one line, too, where I sing, *Like the great George freakin' Strait*, and they went crazy when I said that. That might be my favorite line on the album.

It should be really big around spring break.

There's a lot of potential here. It would be fun to show up and do some interesting things here and there around colleges. I don't know what that looks like yet, but you think about going to a fraternity and say the fraternity that brings the most empty beer cans to the concert gets a meet-and-greet or something. Next thing you know, you have a really major aluminum can recycling drive going [laughs].

You're on the last leg of the Country Nation Tour. How has it felt different from past tours?

I think we did a better-looking production than we've ever done up there. It will be hard to top in that sense. Around this time is when we start looking at the summer. That's being sort of tooled up and built already. We already know who at least part of the [opening acts are]. I can't say yet, but it will be awesome. The way we're doing this summer is going to be in conjunction with "Crushin' It." You'll have a really good time if you come out. By [this] summer, we'll have three hits off this album, hopefully. There's almost nothing you can't play off the album that your hard-core fans haven't heard, which is good.

How do indoor winter crowds compare to outdoor summer crowds? Less rowdy?

They're not less rowdy at all, but they're not naked [laughs]. A friend who is a filmmaker came to

GETTING IN THE SPIRIT

Brad is one of the latest country stars to launch his own line of apparel as he teams up with Boot Barn, America's largest Western and work wear store.

He is developing an exclusive line of hats, boots, jeans and other items, billed as Moonshine Spirit by Brad Paisley, blending Boot Barn's Western heritage with a modern country flavor.

"Boot Barn and I have created what I think is an authentic and very wearable line of country clothing," Brad said. "It's hip, modern, rugged and country, ready for the stage and ready to go out on the town."

Aimed at males 18 to 40, Moonshine Spirit by Brad Paisley will feature casual as well as dressy merchandise. The collection debuted at the grand opening of the Boot Barn store in Nashville and is available online and at all Boot Barn stores.





A man of many talents: (clockwise from above) Brad performs on the finale of *Rising Star*, shares the stage with Alan Jackson and jams on his guitar.



one of my shows and walked about on the lawn with a video camera and it's insane. I had no idea. He said there were people fornicating [laughs], and there was another one where they lit a lot of trash like a campfire and the police put it out, and as security was walking away, they were lighting it again. Indoors they're still rowdy, it's just a little more controlled environment.

The Swon Brothers and Parmalee are on the road with you. What do you want a newer act to have learned after they've opened for you?

I want them to say, "If I ever get the chance to headline a large tour, I'm going to treat them the way we were treated," which is the way that we try to do it, and we learned that from great people as well. You can

ask a lot of different acts, like The Band Perry, Sugarland, guys like that, they had the best time out with us. I've had both experiences. Someone like Alan Jackson couldn't have been better to us, and then there were others, maybe it's not the artist's fault, but we were not treated well and there's just no reason not to be great to these people.

Speaking of crushing it, you and Carrie Underwood crushed it hosting the CMAs this fall for the seventh time. What other awards show would you like to host with her?

The Oscars. I would devour that. I would love that. I would be like, "Let's do that." I wouldn't be the least bit scared. We would need, however, more of a movie background than just songs in Pixar movies from me

and *Soul Surfer* [laughs]. Right now, we don't quite qualify. If we could ever do it, I'm telling you, we would blow the roof off the place. I think the Oscars wouldn't know what hit them if we got the chance. It would be the coolest thing ever.

You spent part of last summer on ABC's talent competition *Rising Star*. Is it coming back?

I haven't heard.

If it comes back, would you like to continue on it?

Oh, absolutely. It was a blast. [Contestant] Josh Peavy came to Nashville in December and I took him to meet some people. He's thinking about a career in Christian country, so I made him a promise during the show that I'd let him cut a song at my studio, so we're going to do that. **CW**

BRAD & CARRIEBY HARRISON/MCLARY/REUTERS/CORBIS; BRAD BY JEFF LIPSKY/BIEBER PR; BRAD PERFORMING ON THE FINALE OF *RISEING STAR* BY ADAM ROSE/ABC; ALAN & BRAD BY RICK DIAMOND/CMT



A HAND UP

VINCE GILL joins a partnership to help revitalize small towns across America.



Vince Gill took the Hall of Fame stage with (from left) Frontier Communications chairman and CEO Maggie Wilderrotter, DISH Network president and CEO Joseph Clayton, Frontier Communications executive vice president Kathleen Abernathy and CoBank CEO Robert Engel.

VINCE GILL HAS NEVER forgotten his Oklahoma roots, where he learned the value of a strong work ethic plus valuable lessons in common sense. That's why he's teaming up with Frontier Communications, DISH Network Corp. and CoBank for a program called America's Best Communities, which aims to revitalize small towns and cities across the U.S.

Vince announced his involvement with the program at a special press conference at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum in Nashville, taking the stage with the CEOs of the three participating sponsor companies. America's Best Communities is basically a \$10 million competition that will reward cities who propose the best and most innovative plans for economic development. The program has already drawn more than 200 applicants across 27 states, and folks representing many of those towns were on hand at the Hall of Fame for the big announcement.

Vince, a member of the Country Music Hall of Fame, addressed the crowd and spoke of his affinity and appreciation for small towns. "I love the spirit of rural

America," Vince said. "There's a lot of small-town community in me. My family came from rural roots. People scratched life out of the dirt. I would not have a career if it weren't for small towns."

The competition offers potential incentives for communities that aim to grow and prosper. Up to 50 quarterfinalists will be selected in April and awarded development funds for their revitalization proposals. At the end of the competition in 2017, the top three applicants will share \$6 million in prize money. The winning community will be awarded \$3 million, with \$2 million for second place and \$1 million for third place. The winnings will be used to implement each town's improvement plans. Cities and towns within the Frontier Communications service territory, with populations between 9,500 and 80,000, are eligible to apply for America's Best Communities.

It's a program that Vince can easily get behind. "I love the spirit behind this," he shared with the guest audience. "This really seems to be kind of a pay-it-forward mentality. This is really about, 'Hey, let's help each other

out.' I think that's the way to live. It's not a handout, but a hand up."

Following the announcement, Vince noted to *Country Weekly* that small towns represent the true backbone of America. "They feed the country—they protect the country," Vince said. "People in small towns do a lot of things that really go unnoticed in some way. I think we need to rediscover that part of the country and what it means to all of us."

Vince, who will serve primarily as an ambassador for the program, added that everybody's a winner in America's Best Communities, regardless of the final outcome. He pointed to the many benefit concerts he performs as a comparison. "Always after one of those shows, someone will ask how much money it raised," Vince explained. "And I always say that's not the point. What really matters is that we tried and we made our best effort. So, in this contest, everybody that tries is doing something positive for their community. What this program is going to do is make where they live even better. And how can that not be a great thing?"

— **BOB PAXMAN**

NOW PLAYING BOX OFFICE BUCKAROOS

Four box office smashes in one year and all with a direct tie to country music? Unheard of! But in 1980, with the release of **COAL MINER'S DAUGHTER**, **URBAN COWBOY**, **HONEYSUCKLE ROSE** and **9 TO 5**, country music took another step closer to mainstream popularity. It wasn't the first time country music appeared on the big screen—it certainly played a role in the 1975 cult classic *Nashville*—but it was definitely a time for country music to kick up its heels and shout, “Yee Haw-llywood!”

ONE NIGHT ONLY!

BY TAMMY RAGUSA

SOLD OUT!

COAL MINER'S DAUGHTER

RELEASED:

March 7, 1980

DIRECTOR:

Michael Apted

KEY CAST:

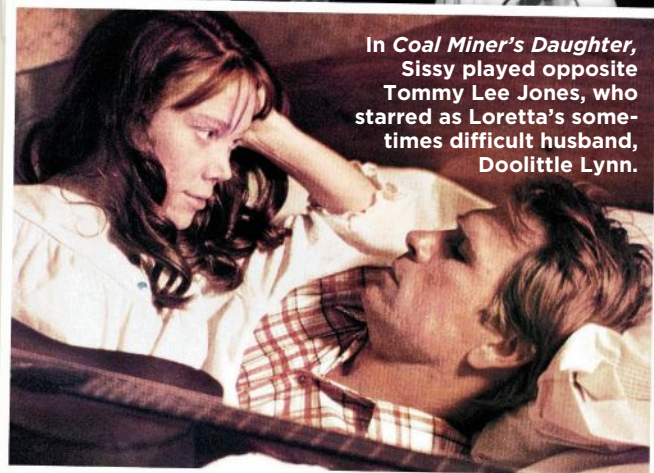
Sissy Spacek
as Loretta Lynn;
Tommy Lee Jones
as Doolittle Lynn;
Beverly D'Angelo
as Patsy Cline

FILM FACTS:

Adapted from Loretta Lynn's 1976 autobiography of the same name, this film tells the country music legend's story, from her humble beginnings in Butcher Holler, Ky., through her rise to fame with its occasional dark side. With obvious shots in Nashville, including the Grand Ole Opry, the movie also found settings in Kentucky, Virginia and West Virginia. Loretta handpicked Sissy Spacek to play her and made the announcement before Sissy had actually confirmed. Sissy asked to do her own singing in an effort to deter Loretta's enthusiasm, but to no avail. Beverly D'Angelo also chose to perform herself instead of lip-synching to Patsy Cline's voice, showing the true tenacity of both actresses. Opry legends Ernest Tubb, Roy Acuff and Minnie Pearl also made cameos in the movie, playing themselves. In addition to Sissy Spacek receiving the Academy Award for Best Actress, which Loretta was on hand to see, the film was given a rare score of 100 percent on movie review website Rotten Tomatoes.



Sissy Spacek (as Loretta) visits Minnie Pearl and Ernest Tubb on the Grand Ole Opry, and (below) sings with Loretta.



In *Coal Miner's Daughter*, Sissy played opposite Tommy Lee Jones, who starred as Loretta's sometimes difficult husband, Doolittle Lynn.

THE MUSIC:

The *Coal Miner's Daughter* soundtrack album, not to be confused with Loretta Lynn's *Coal Miner's Daughter* album, includes Sissy Spacek's versions of "There He Goes," "I'm a Honky Tonk Girl," "You're Lookin' at Country" and "Coal Miner's Daughter," along with Beverly D'Angelo's covers of "Crazy" and "Sweet Dreams."

FAMOUS QUOTE:

"An' stoppa that growlin'.
You sound like a big ol' bar."

URBAN COWBOY

RELEASED:

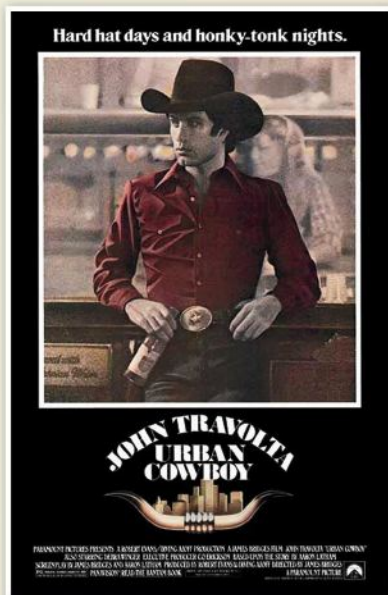
June 6, 1980

DIRECTOR:

James Bridges

KEY CAST:

John Travolta
as Bud;
Debra Winger
as Sissy;
Scott Glenn
as Wes Hightower;
Madolyn Smith
as Pam;
Barry Corbin
as Uncle Bob;
Brooke Anderson
as Aunt Corene

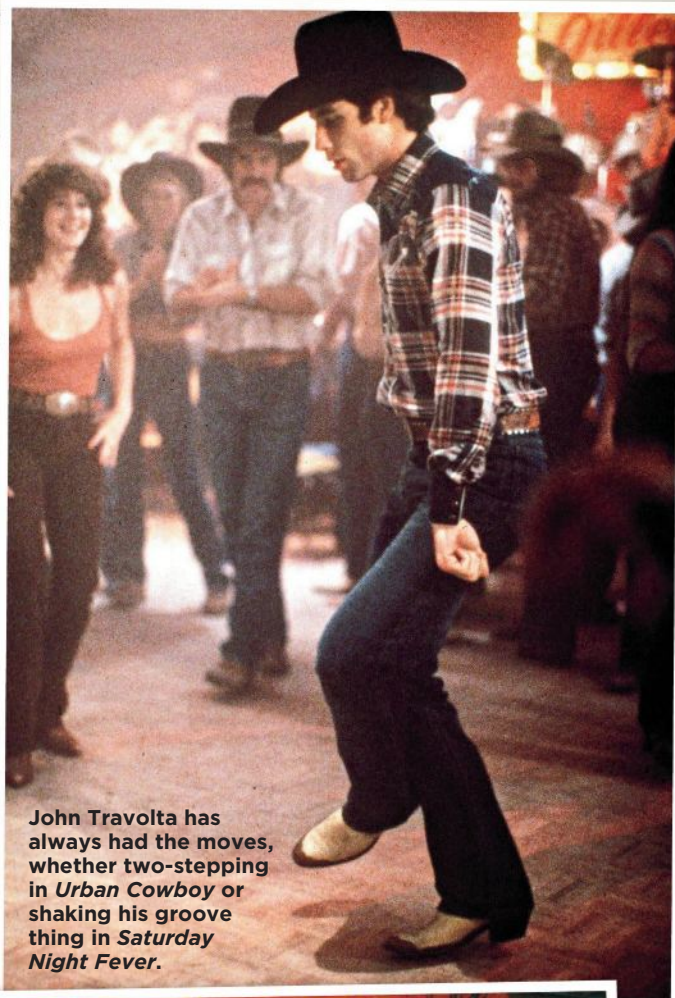


FILM FACTS:

It was really about growing up and finding yourself, but when you do that in East Texas, you're going to quite likely come of age with country music as your soundtrack. John Travolta played Bud Davis—a young buck sowing his wild oats and striking out on his own in Houston. The story is much like an old country song, following Bud's life and often rocky romance with Sissy, replete with drinking, fighting, cheating, bull riding and two-stepping. While the majority of the film takes place in Gilley's nightclub in Pasadena, filming also occurred in Houston proper, nearby Deer Park and Huntsville, Texas. John had already proven his prowess as a hooper three years earlier in *Saturday Night Fever*, but Patrick Swayze (*Dirty Dancing*) came in to teach him the two-step. For the bull riding, John had a mechanical bull installed in his home. Mickey Gilley, Johnny Lee, Charlie Daniels and band members Taz Di Gregorio and Charlie Hayward, and Bonnie Raitt all appeared as themselves. Model Jerry Hall and her sister Cyndy appear briefly.

THE MUSIC:

The soundtrack for the movie was a No. 1 album and included the hits "Lookin' for Love" by Johnny Lee,



John Travolta has always had the moves, whether two-stepping in *Urban Cowboy* or shaking his groove thing in *Saturday Night Fever*.



"Stand by Me" by Mickey Gilley, "The Devil Went Down to Georgia" by Charlie Daniels, "Could I Have This Dance" by Anne Murray and "Love the World Away" by Kenny Rogers.

FAMOUS QUOTE:

"All cowboys ain't dumb. Some of 'em got smarts real good."

HONEYSUCKLE ROSE

RELEASED:

July 18, 1980

DIRECTOR:

Jerry Schatzberg

KEY CAST:

Willie Nelson
as Buck Bonham;
Dyan Cannon
as Viv Bonham;
Amy Irving
as Lily Ramsey;
Slim Pickens
as Garland Ramsey

FILM FACTS:

The life of a touring musician comes with its own set of challenges, but when Willie Nelson as Buck Bonham loses his guitarist, and Garland Ramsey and Garland's pretty young daughter, Lily, step up to fill in, the challenge grows exponentially, putting Buck's wife, Viv, to the "Stand by Your Man" test. In reality, life imitated art as



Willie and Amy Irving were rumored to have begun a relationship on the set, and both Amy and Dyan did their own singing in the movie and on the soundtrack. According to IMDB, the movie and character of Buck were written specifically for Willie, who, in turn, wrote the movie's signature song, "On the Road Again," after signing on to play the role. In staying true to Willie's Texas roots, the film was shot around Austin and Padre Island National Seashore.

THE MUSIC:

The soundtrack for *Honeysuckle Rose* includes the classic Willie Nelson tracks "Blue Eyes Cryin' in the Rain," "Whiskey River," "Bloody Mary Morning" and "Angel Flying Too Close to the Ground."



(Above) Willie Nelson, Dyan Cannon and Amy Irving; (below) Willie and Mickey Rooney Jr., who played Cotton Roberts



FAMOUS QUOTE:

"I've always been scared to death you'd get old before I grew up."

9 TO 5

RELEASED:

Dec. 19, 1980

DIRECTOR:

Colin Higgins

KEY CAST:

Dolly Parton
as Doralee Rhodes;
Jane Fonda
as Judy Bernly;
Lily Tomlin
as Violet Newstead;
Dabney Coleman
as Franklin Hart



FILM FACTS:

It isn't set in the West, nor does it have a cowboy or country music theme, but with Dolly Parton in one of the starring roles and singing the movie's theme song, we have to adopt it as our own. The movie

tells the story of three female administrators who are under the sexist and exploitive control of their incompetent boss, whom they have spent their careers making look good. When push finally comes to shove, and the flirtation goes too far, Doralee, Judy and Violet trap Mr. Hart in his own home until they can devise a way to justly get even. This was Dolly's film debut, but she also wrote the Oscar-nominated song "9 to 5." The movie was shot in Los Angeles and San Francisco. A sequel was

discussed but eventually scrapped after director Colin Higgins' death in 1988. However, *9 to 5* was retooled as a Broadway musical, for which Dolly composed the score.

FAMOUS QUOTE:

"If you ever say another word about me or make another indecent proposal, I'm gonna get that gun of mine and I'm gonna change you from a rooster to a hen with one shot!"

GO WEST, YOUNG WOMAN

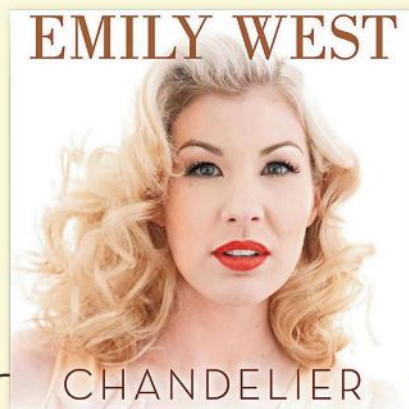
After blowing away the *America's Got Talent* judges and most of the country, Nashville's Emily West is mapping out a new destination.

STORY BY TAMMY RAGUSA

Nashville's music industry gave it their best shot to make her a country star, but a handful of years later, Emily West says the onus falls on her. "I think when I was at Capitol, I think I was trying really hard to be someone that I wasn't, and that's why it didn't work," she says softly. Thoughtful and reflective, Emily looks back on her days as a fledgling country artist without a trace of animosity, admitting that her destiny has worked out just as it should. No, she didn't become a big-time country star, nor did she take home the win during Season 9 of *America's Got Talent*, but she needed neither to land solidly where she feels she is supposed to be. For now.

Emily is as bubbly as a freshly popped bottle of Veuve Clicquot as she

talks about her future, which includes a record deal on Sony Masterworks out of New York. But she owes her fans a debt of gratitude for funding a first project through Pledge Music. "All my pledgers call themselves 'Westies,' which is great," she says, laughing. "They've really been supportive of the whole show and music. I'm really grateful for all the support. I think the pledge helped me get the record deal."



A New York record deal implies that the new music won't be country and Emily concurs. "My personality with singing about tractors, beer? My voice is the kind of voice that needs to sing about love or heartache. It wouldn't be authentic," she says. Then she admits, "I don't know what my genre is, I just like to sing good songs. And that's one thing about [*America's Got Talent*] that I'm so grateful for. They didn't overthink it. They put me in a gown, they put an orchestra right behind me and I got to fly." She uncorks a chorus of giggles, adding, "I don't know why we've got to over-complicate things. Why can't we just wear diamonds and sing songs?"

As comical and vivacious as she is, when it comes to her career, Emily is markedly more serious. Part of that comes from a brief and recent residency in the Big Apple. "When I moved to New York," she remembers, "I learned that in order to really start your life, you really need to make decisions. In Nashville I dreamt a lot and I kind of procrastinated some big decisions I was making. So in order for me to start making big decisions, I needed to move to New York—get lost so you can find yourself, you know? And I did that, then I moved back. If you can move to New York for a little bit and see how they live their life so fast-paced and focused, you can move back to your home and be like, 'This is what I want, this is what I want.'"

Her list of wants is ever-evolving and growing, but first up is the album she's been waiting to make. Favorites from her tenure on *America's Got Talent* will meld with self-penned tunes and songs selected from Nashville's prolific songwriting community. "We did a rendition of 'Nights in White Satin' that is going to break the strongest of men's hearts. It's a totally different version. I'm kind of scared of it. It's not really Moody Blues. It's like listening to a Barbra Streisand movie. It's a beautiful centerpiece for the record and the future I want to have for making music,"





This siren is wailing—from the bright lights and stage of *America's Got Talent* to the warmth of the studio where she's working on her new album.



EMILY WEST CONTINUED

she says. “There’s a song I wrote in London about two years ago, it’s more of a rocker. It’s all over the place, but that’s exactly who I am as an artist. I don’t really do the same song over and over again. But I think, if you have the same voice, it’s going to make sense.”

There’s also a tour in the works for Emily—her first ever. “I’m excited because that’s going to be my one-woman show,” she says animatedly. “It’s very intimate. It’ll be fun. I don’t know what’s going to happen. I never know what my mouth is going to say, that’s why it’s going to be a great tour. This is the thing. I’m not nervous to sing, I’m nervous to talk between songs, that’s what I’m nervous about. So, if

you’re reading this article, get your ticket now because that’s going to be the most fun part, listening to me talk between songs. You never know what’s going to come out.”

More laughter flows from the lovely ingénue, who is half siren and half schoolgirl. And since she lives in Nashville, we just have to ask, could there be more country music in her future? “Absolutely,” she says emphatically. “That’s one of my dreams is to make a full-length album of beautiful and classic country songs. Frank Sinatra was the master of interpreting different songs. He never wrote anything. And I would love to make a classic country record like Patsy Cline one day, but cut like a Merle Haggard, just not be afraid of the old cowboy songs, where you make it classic, but coming from a woman. I think there’s something really cool about that.”

If it sounds like Emily has a full

plate, she does. She reveals, “They’re talking about making *Funny Girl* on Broadway and I’m really kind of dreaming of being Barbra and getting to fly in that world.” She pauses to catch her breath, then admits, “I want to do everything. I want to make as many records as I possibly can. I want to bring joy to as many people as I can and encourage people and have them encourage me. Let’s just walk each other home together. But I’m just so grateful to be here. I never thought I would ever want to do this again because I think I was living for the dream a little more than I should have. Now I’m a little more grown up and I know what matters. And I’m so grateful that my family has stood beside me. I have such incredible friends. I am blown away with their grace and their faith in me. I am just so grateful.”

And for a moment, the sun appears to be rising in the West. **CW**

[ON TOUR]



LUKE BRYAN

That's My Kind of Night Tour 2015

Feb. 10
Grand Rapids, Mich.
Van Andel Arena

Feb. 11
Evansville, Ind.
Ford Center

Feb. 12
Louisville, Ky.
KFC Yum!
Center

Feb. 14
New Orleans
Mardi Gras

Feb. 18
Estero, Fla.
Germain Arena

Feb. 19
Orlando, Fla.
Amway Center

Feb. 21
Orlando, Fla.
Amway Center

Feb. 28
Stockholm, Sweden
C2C: Country
to Country,
Ericsson
Globe

March 1
Oslo, Norway
C2C: Country
to Country,
Spektrum

March 3
Glasgow, Scotland
Clyde
Auditorium

March 4
Munich, Germany
Theaterfabrik

March 6
Berlin, Germany
C-Club

March 7
London, England
C2C - The O2

March 8
Dublin, Ireland
C2C - The O2 Dublin

LEFT IS RIGHT

Mac Powell
comes out
swinging with
his new solo
album.

STORY BY JON FREEMAN



IN SPORTS PARLANCE, a southpaw refers to a left-handed athlete, particularly in baseball or boxing, where facing a lefty can be tricky because their approach feels backward, bizarre. The same might be said about Mac Powell's latest album, *Southpaw*, which mixes organic, traditional sounds and fiery Southern rock with modern production techniques for something wholly unexpected.

Mac might not be familiar to many country fans, but as the lead singer of multiplatinum Christian band Third Day, he's a bona fide rock star to a certain segment of the population. The Clanton, Ala., native was blessed with one of those voices—soulful, deep and thick—that is strong enough to sing anything, not just the shape-shifting rock and praise music of his main band.

That includes country, and *Southpaw*, released in October 2014, makes

a really good pitch (see what I did there?) for him to come join Nashville's ranks if he ever decides to quit his day job.

"For many, many years I thought if I ever do a solo record I'm gonna call it *Southpaw* because I'm left-handed," explains Mac. "When I played ball when I was a kid, everybody would say, 'Hey, there's a southpaw.' My immediate family, my mom and my dad, me and my sister—there are four of us—all of us were left-handed. It was a big deal. It was rarer than rare. Now I have five kids and none of them are left-handed except my two adopted kids." He sheepishly admits the title doesn't have anything to do with the music.

Mac's initial foray into country was his self-titled 2012 release, which was well received but quickly faded from view. He had wrestled with the idea of making a country album for years,



but was busy with Third Day and wasn't even sure if it made sense for him to attempt it. "There were so many things that kept me from doing it," says Mac. "There were fears of, I don't know what I'm doing, to am I good enough to do it, would people accept it at all or totally not even give me a shot?"

"Then finally I got to a place where I said, 'I can't put it off any longer,'" he continues. "Even if nobody hears it, I gotta get these songs out of my head and out of my heart and onto a record.' I'm so glad that I did."

Relationships and love figure heavily into the subject matter, whether Mac is asking his woman to go out and dance in the funky "Red Boots" or staying far, far away in the bluegrass-tinged "90 to Nothing," which he wrote with his producer Jason Hoard and Travis Tritt. "That's just a completely storytelling song," says Mac. "Well, that's not true at all in my life, that hasn't happened, but I'm able to just make the story up and that's what's so much fun about it."

That's one aspect that Mac finds exciting about country music. In Christian music, he explains, there are more rules about what you can do lyrically, and in country there is a freedom to imagine and pretend. Nevertheless, Mac is careful to record songs that don't conflict with his values, and while *Southpaw* isn't totally chaste or innocent, there's nothing on it that wouldn't be fine for the kids to hear. In fact, one song Mac wrote with Darius Rucker didn't make the cut for that reason. Thankfully, the pair also concocted the riff-heavy "Hard Headed Woman," and that one passed the values sniff test.

"I have to be careful about some of the things I sing about, and that's good and bad," says Mac. "And I'm OK with that responsibility, both as a Christian artist and as a dad who's got five kids."

Even so, Mac's adventures in country don't always sit too well with some of Third Day's more hardline fans. Often his shows take him to bars—you know, the kind that serve alcohol. "There's a small handful of people who give me a hard time on Facebook or Twitter about it," he admits, adding that Third Day's next project—a worship record called *Lead Us Back* that is due March 3—might not be a popular choice either. "Whatever you do, you're gonna get that. There's gonna be people that are mad that we're making a worship record. There's gonna be people that are mad that we're making a Southern rock-sounding record. That really doesn't bother me at all."

More importantly, Mac thinks just staying in tune with his muse is probably the key to not getting bogged down in what a minority of people feel about his artistic endeavors. He sees himself gradually doing more country-related projects, balancing them with his duties in Third Day. But Mac swears he definitely won't be aping the commercial trends in country.

"I want to make what I want to listen to. I'm not gonna



(Right) Mac and wife Aimee spend some time in the great outdoors; (below) Mac and his kids celebrate Father's Day.



be stubborn about it, I'm gonna listen to people," he says. "But I want to make what I want to make. And if labels don't like that and if radio doesn't want to play it, that's fine. I'm not making this to get on the radio. I'm not making this to be signed to a label. I'm making this because it's what I want to do and hopefully there will be some people that like it, too."

After hearing *Southpaw*, it might make sense to prepare for the unexpected. **CW**

[CATCHING UP WITH]



HEART

*How a hit songwriter
and producer met with
unimaginable tragedy to
find faith and a renewed
interest in his music
on the other side.*

OF

STEELE

STORY BY
ALANNA
CONAWAY

There is an undeniable presence about songwriter Jeffrey Steele. His heavily tattooed arms, quirky fashion sense and charismatic laugh are quite striking, but his eyes reveal the heart of a man who has been through the highest highs and the lowest lows that life can dish out.

Today, Jeffrey—wearing a green Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles T-shirt, naturally—is settling into the writing room at his Nashville office before an appointment with the award-winning Tom Douglas. The pair has shared success in recent months with the Tim McGraw and Faith Hill duet “Meanwhile Back at Mama’s” and will try to make similar magic once again. Jeffrey also just discovered that his Grammy-nominated Keith Urban and Eric Church duet, “Raise ’Em Up,” has been chosen as Keith’s next single.

All is great in the life of Jeffrey Steele. It’s hard to believe that less than a decade ago he endured a tragedy that no one should ever have to experience.

On Jan. 28, 2007, Jeffrey’s world was turned upside down when his 13-year-old son, Alex, lost his life in a horrific ATV accident. The tragedy forced Jeffrey

to shut down and go through a whirlwind of darkness. “I just spun out sideways and got pretty disillusioned,” he recalls. “My whole life changed, and it still is. My whole outlook of who I was and who I wanted to be wasn’t matching up. I had to step back. I wanted to just be alone. I locked myself in a room and hid out. I still wrote songs, but everything was shifting and taking different directions.”

All Jeffrey had known since moving to Nashville was working at being what he calls a “conservator of life”—watching people from afar and writing about their situations. When his son died, Jeffrey suddenly found himself, along with his wife and daughters, on the other side of the fence. “We listen to how people talk and say things and then write about it. We observe,” Jeffrey says softly, as he glances down at his many tattoos, one of

which is a portrait of his young son. “Life—the tragedies, the joys, the heartache—it doesn’t hit us like it hits other people. So when life really hits us for real and you go through a tragedy like I did, it doesn’t make sense because you think those things aren’t supposed to happen to us. We’re not supposed to suffer this.”

Jeffrey says that his song “What Hurts the Most,” which Rascal Flatts recorded and released in 2006, took on a completely new meaning in the wake of the family’s loss. “After everything happened, that became my song,” Jeffrey says. “Then you really start to see what the fans get from the music. You don’t always realize what effect your song has on people. The power of the lyrics and that tragedy gave me perspective in that way. I

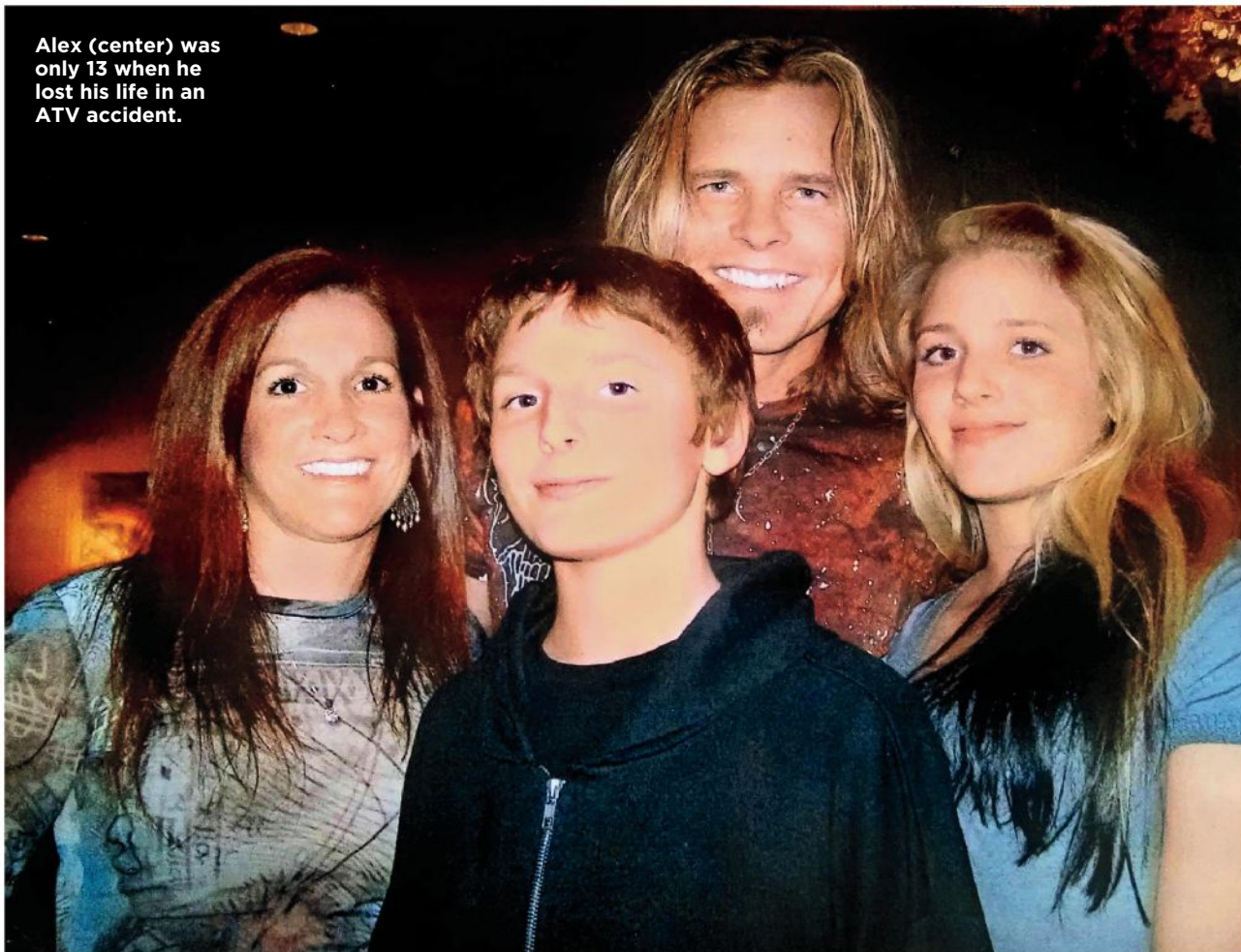
never really realized it, and now as a writer, I see that.”

He did continue his commitments of performing live during those dark days that followed, believing that it was helping him heal. “I needed it so bad, to go out there and sing and release some emotion,” Jeffrey recalls. “But as soon as I was done playing, I just wanted to go home. I just couldn’t deal with the conversational side of it. It was killing me.



(Top) Jeffrey and son Alex mug for the camera; (above) Jeffrey with family: (from left) wife Stephanie, daughter Casey, granddaughter Hadley, daughter Justine, grandson Bentley and daughter Jessie.

Alex (center) was only 13 when he lost his life in an ATV accident.



"I'M JUST GOING TO HONOR HIM FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE AND BE THE MAN I'M SUPPOSED TO BE."

JEFFREY STEELE CONTINUED

"I was just struggling with everything," he continues, looking down at his right hand where A-L-E-X is tattooed across his fingers. "At times like that, you either run from your faith or you lean on it even harder. Thankfully, I leaned on it even harder. I knew things in my life had to change, for my son and his legacy. I just want to be the best man I can be for the rest of my life. I've been through a lot, and when I look back at all this crazy success, I'd trade every drop of it for one more day with him or to make that

not have happened. But I can't, nobody can, so what do I do with it? I'm just going to honor him for the rest of my life and be the man I'm supposed to be. It's taken me a long time to get to that place, but I'm here now and I want to stay here."

He emerged from this long, sad period of his life, finally sobering up and rediscovering his faith. Jeffrey also set up the Alex LeVasseur Memorial Fund in his son's honor. He leads the annual Jeffrey Steele & Friends concert to raise money for the fund, which goes toward scholarships and has built a skate

park for teenagers. This year's event, scheduled for March 10 at The Franklin Theatre, will feature guests Chris Janson, LOCASH, Delbert McCClinton and many others.

Additionally, Jeffrey threw himself into his songwriting with renewed interest and opened his multipurpose publishing/artist development company, 3 Ring Circus. "It's been so fun because I'm playing this new role now. I'm still a writer and producer, but now I'm kind of the old guy in the room going, 'Kids . . .'" he says, laughing. "There's a really cool side to that, watching these guys develop

PHOTOS COURTESY JEFFREY STEELE



Jeffrey's daughter Casey and her husband, Colin, have added to the family with little Hadley.



Jeffrey and family visit the skate park named in his son's honor.



Is it naptime? Or is Hadley helping her grandpa dream up a new song?

into these great songwriters."

Still, Jeffrey—one-time frontman of the '90s group Boy Howdy—hasn't completely given up on being a recording artist just yet. His new album, *Authentic*—reportedly due in February—is filled with original songs that hearken back to the classic country that he grew up with. "The songs sound like they come from a different era," he explains. "It's an album that will pay tribute to what built this town and the kind of songs I grew up listening to when I first started getting into country music. It's a side of me vocally that

people probably don't realize that I'm capable of doing. I'm just having so much fun with it."

Back in the present, Jeffrey is once again in a really good place. He understands that life (and by extension, his career in music) is an unending roller coaster of glorious highs and gut-wrenching lows. Hard as it sometimes gets, it's a ride he plans to stay on for years to come.

"My blessing and curse is I've been able to do a lot of things," says Jeffrey, who was inducted into the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2013. "Over the years, everyone was always

trying to tell me what I needed to be, what I needed to look like and sound like. It just never worked because I couldn't do it. I had to really decide what I really wanted to do. My heart has always wanted to chase the song and not worry so much about what that leads to as far as how big of a star I become or don't become. Leaving a great song behind is much more important than leaving a great picture behind that will still mean something 20 years from now. That is rare and hard to come by. It's a tough fight, but it's a fun fight." **CW**

[REVIEWS]

ALBUMS

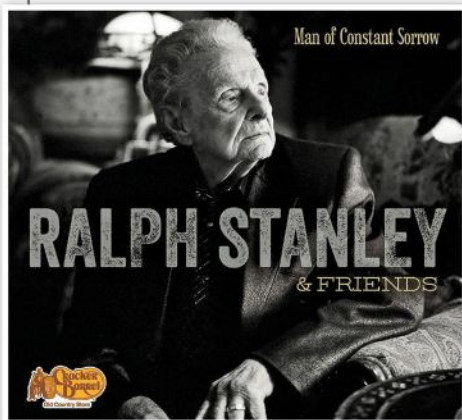
RALPH STANLEY & FRIENDS

Man of Constant Sorrow

CRACKER BARREL

GRADE: A

For those who bemoan the loss of traditional country music or the weakening presence of bluegrass music in country's landscape, go now to your local Cracker Barrel and pick up Dr. Ralph Stanley's newest album, *Man of Constant Sorrow*.



This collection of bluegrass-inspired Stanley Brothers favorites is oozing with fiddle, mandolin, banjo and doghouse bass. And production is so respectful of the nature of the music, you can almost hear a boot thumping out the rhythm on a plank floor. Overflowing with star power, Dr. Ralph invited some of the most emotive voices in the world of music to collaborate with him on 11 of the 13 tracks. Obvious choices of Ricky Skaggs and Del McCoury make for expectedly good offerings, but younger country stars like Josh Turner and Dierks Bentley give

inspired performances, while Lee Ann Womack's delivery on "White Dove" is absolutely delicious, despite the song's sorrowful message. And Old Crow Medicine Show's harmonizing with Dr. Ralph on "Short Life of Trouble" is chilling. British rockers Elvis Costello and Robert Plant are also bright spots on the project, which really doesn't

have any dull moments. And while "Man of Constant Sorrow" has become Dr. Ralph's signature song, his tribute to his late brother Carter on "Hills of Home" will bring a tear to your eye.

— TAMMY RAGUSA

AT A GLANCE: With friends like this, who needs bros?



RYAN BINGHAM

Fear and Saturday Night

AXSTER BINGHAM RECORDS

GRADE: A-

Man, wouldn't it be nice to just pull a Thoreau-like exit from your daily life and live in seclusion while you try to figure everything out? That's what acclaimed songwriter and Academy Award winner Ryan Bingham did for his latest album, *Fear and Saturday Night*, holing up by himself in an Airstream trailer with no electricity or Internet so he could focus on writing. It seems like an extreme approach, but the end certainly justifies the means in this case.

It's a deeply personal collection of songs and it's hard not to read something like the gentle opening track, "Nobody Knows My Trouble," with



Ryan's craggy voice depicting an unfor- giving tumbleweed existence, as purely autobiographical. On scuzzy rockers like "Top Shelf Drug" and "Island in the Sky," Ryan looks at the joy, or at least the intensity, of love. It's a nice balance to the numerous songs about messing up or getting messed up, like the title

track, which boasts the killer line, *I don't fear nothing but myself*. There's not a bad track among them, though slower tempos on the back half of the record may test some listeners' patience. But in *Fear's* best moments, like "Adventures of You and Me" and "Radio," Ryan ties enthralling narratives to rhythms that will set your body loose.

— JON FREEMAN

AT A GLANCE: A beautiful bummer of an album.

SINGLE

ZAC BROWN BAND

"Homegrown"

SOUTHERN GROUND ARTISTS / JOHN VARVATOS RECORDS / BIG MACHINE / REPUBLIC RECORDS

GRADE: A

Zac Brown must be the world's most easygoing guy, or at least that's what his songs would have you believe. From "Chicken Fried" on down, Zac and his growing crew have extolled the pleasures of being happy where you are and yet managed to avoid the down-home clichés of his country peers trying to do the same thing. The group's latest, "Homegrown," reflects a more muscular, rock 'n' roll edge that they may have picked up working with Dave Grohl over the last year. A steady drum-beat gets things rolling, then the rest of the band falls in line behind a wall of guitars, including a biting single-note guitar

lead. The chord changes in the chorus have an instantly familiar feel to them, like a favorite Tom Petty song, and the multitalented band adds some gospelly harmonies to lift it skyward. There's a mantra-like key line in this one that Zac takes care to repeat over and over: *I got everything I need and nothing that I don't*. He's got a little patch of ground, a family, good friends nearby—the things that really matter—and he ties it up in a blissful, radio-ready package.

— J.F.

AT A GLANCE: A message of contentment that begs to be heard again and again.



GRADES: A OUTSTANDING | B ABOVE AVERAGE | C AVERAGE | D BELOW AVERAGE | F #FAIL



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Spotlighting artists who reside on the fringes of country music



CAROLINE SPENCE

FOR FANS OF:
Emmylou Harris, Patty Griffin,
Mindy Smith

MANY PEOPLE PROBABLY think that country music equals banjo, fiddle and pedal steel, and everything else is just an accessory. But young Caroline Spence thinks the songwriting is really the thing that best keeps the music anchored to country traditions.

"I think on my record, there's some of that sonic country values," the Virginia-to-Nashville transplant says of her debut full-length album, *Somehow*. "It's definitely in that genre. It's become such a buzzword lately. When you say 'country' you either make fans or you lose fans or people don't know what exactly to say about it. But I'd be proud; I'd be proud if someone would recognize

the country songwriting."

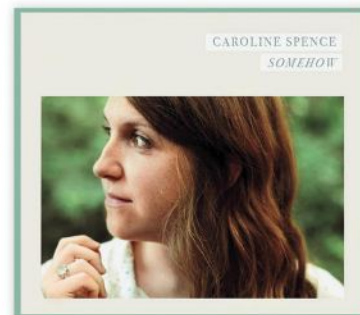
Certainly, 25-year-old Caroline's songs bear all the hallmarks: heart-break, dysfunctional relationships and the dreadful uncertainty of being young and trying to fumble through. Sonically, more Tom Petty-esque rockers like "Don't Call" are sequenced next to plaintive ballads like "Hello Tomorrow," and Caroline's soprano imbues them with a sweetness and innocence that contrasts with the songs' hard-won lessons.

"The most connected I've ever felt to any genre of song is country music writing and alt-country writing," she affirms. "I just think it's the most honest."

In "Whiskey Watered Down," Caroline uses the title phrase as a metaphor for relationships and songs that just don't have the same kick. It rings so true that it's kind of hard to believe someone hasn't written it until now. "Honestly, it was one of the first songs I wrote where I was like, 'Wow, that is the kind of song I need to keep writing,'" recalls Caroline. "I just felt really proud of it. It felt really self-contained and it almost sounded like it didn't come from a young girl."

ESSENTIAL LISTENING:

- "Whiskey Watered Down"
- "Hard Headed, Hard Hearted"
- "Don't Call"
- "Seeing Other People"



All songs from *Somehow*.
For more information, visit carolinespencemusic.com.

To record and distribute *Somehow*, the unsigned Caroline turned to crowdfunding website Indiegogo to raise money. Thanks to family, friends and fans she's made from years of touring, she reached her goal and was able to put the collection together. Early backers will get to hear the album before its March 3 release.

"The crowdfunding thing, I put it off a long time and I was just thinking about the kind of moves I was ready to make and the kind of record I thought this could be," she explains. "And I just felt like I couldn't do that without a certain amount of support. So, luckily I got it," she says, laughing. "It's a scary thing to do."

But worth it when you've got songs like these.

— JON FREEMAN



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[STARS UP CLOSE]

→ Country Weekly readers rub elbows with their favorite stars . . .



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of Roanoke, Va.



Brantley Gilbert
with Marla Keck of
Kokomo, Ind.



Kaitlyn Donnelly of
Whitby, Ontario, with
Charles Esten



Sarah Hudspeth of Edinburg,
Ill., with **Scotty McCreery**



Willie Nelson with Julie
Daigle and Staff Sgt. Jim
Daigle of Pearland, Texas



Jaylynn Snell of
Saint Johnsville, N.Y.,
with **Dierks Bentley**

WANT YOUR FAN PHOTO PUBLISHED IN COUNTRY WEEKLY?

Send photos to Stars Up Close, *Country Weekly*, 506 2nd Avenue South, Suite 200, Nashville, TN 37210, or submit online (no duplicate submissions, please) at CountryWeekly.com/fanphotos. Be sure to include the name, hometown and state of each person pictured. Publication is not guaranteed; photos cannot be returned.

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**Better
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Longer Battery Life**

Say good-bye to everything you hate about cell phones. Say hello to Jitterbug.

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Available in
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911 Access	FREE	FREE
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Voice Dial	FREE	FREE
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[FLASHBACK]

THIS WEEK IN COUNTRY



**FEB.
6,
1971**

What's always amazed fans about **DOLLY PARTON**, aside from her obvious physical attributes, is her remarkable songwriting ability. She's written a large number of her hits, with many of them being solo efforts, defying the standard Music Row tradition of co-writing. Dolly drew from the well of her East Tennessee, Smoky Mountains background when she penned a tune about a backwoods recluse called "Joshua." The song tells the tale of a young girl who decides to visit the man, reputed to have a mean-spirited, hostile disposition. But the girl finds that a much different character lies underneath that rugged surface. On Feb. 6, 1971, "Joshua" hit the top of the charts, giving Dolly her first No. 1 record.

ALAN JACKSON proved himself a fan "favorite" as he carried home a pair of honors at the 21st annual American Music Awards on Feb. 7, 1994. The lanky star's album *A Lot About Livin' (And a Little 'Bout Love)* copped the award for Favorite Country Album, while one of the album's runaway hit singles, "Chattahoochee," won Favorite Country Song. Oddly enough, Alan failed to nab Favorite Country Male Artist, an award that went to Garth Brooks. And to hardly anyone's surprise, Reba McEntire was the fans' pick for Favorite Country Female Artist.



**FEB.
7,
1994**



**FEB.
3,
2009**

DARIUS RUCKER made the career leap to country music after years of singing lead vocals for rock group Hootie & the Blowfish. And a grand leap it was! Darius made his country chart debut with the catchy "Don't Think I Don't Think About It" in 2008, the first single from his album *Learn to Live*. The single caught the necessary fire with fans and went to No. 1 in September of that year. Darius received additional good news on Feb. 3, 2009, when "Don't Think I Don't Think About It" was certified gold for sales of 500,000 copies.

To read more on **Darius Rucker**, go to CountryWeekly.com/magazine/vault

BIRTHDAYS



FEB. 4, 1962

CLINT BLACK

enjoyed one of the hottest debuts in country history, as his first four singles, kicked off by "A Better Man," all reached No. 1. Clint married actress Lisa Hartman in 1991 and the couple has one daughter, Lily Pearl, born in 2001. This past year, Clint headlined the inaugural Winter Nash Bash concert at the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville.

FEB. 2, 1946
HOWARD BELLAMY
of the Bellamy Brothers

FEB. 2, 1986
BLAINE LARSEN

FEB. 3, 1964
MATRACA BERG

FEB. 3, 1982
JESSICA HARP
of The Wreckers

FEB. 5, 1971
SARA EVANS

FEB. 5, 1984
TYLER FARR

FEB. 6, 1962
RICHIE McDONALD
of Lonestar

FEB. 6, 1967
ANITA COCHRAN

FEB. 7, 1962
GARTH BROOKS

20
Inches wide!

THOMAS KINKADE "Light Your Way Home"

Illuminating
Canvas Print



Genuine canvas print
recreates the look and feel
of an original painting



Enjoy the illumination of a
Thomas Kinkade painting as never
before through more than
75 strategically placed lights



Hand-applied glitter adds to the
shimmer of a Christmas Eve snowfall

Shown much smaller than actual size of 20
inches wide x 12 inches tall. Requires 3 "AA"
batteries, not included.



Thomas Kinkade
"Light Your Way Home"

Lights Up!

Genuine artist's canvas features twinkling fiber-optic lights that change color!

Thomas Kinkade's Beacon of Hope remains one of the most acclaimed of his masterful visions of lighthouses. Originally painted as a summertime setting, this magnificent work has now been re-imagined in the distinctive style of the *Painter of Light*SM, and is yours to enjoy as never seen before—viewed under a peaceful blanket of Christmas snowfall, surrounded by the festive lights of the season!

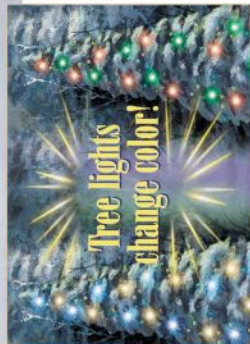
Measuring 20 inches wide in its cherry-toned frame, this Illuminated Canvas Print utilizes over 75 fiber-optic lights and hand-applied glitter to create

a welcoming glow that promises to fill your heart and home with holiday spirit. *Plus, several lights even change color to add even more realism and warmth to the scene!*

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Twinkling lights on the trees actually transition from one color to another and back again. A Thomas Kinkade canvas print has never looked so festive!

Beacon of Hope © 1994 Thomas Kinkade
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[CHARTS]

WEEK ENDING JAN 24, 2015

ALBUMS



Florida Georgia Line's sophomore album, which was recently certified gold for sales of more than 500,000 units, pops up to No. 5.

SINGLES

Released in late October, "Don't It," the debut single from Billy Currington's upcoming sixth studio album, arrives in the Top 30 at No. 30.



A toast to Little Big Town's "Day Drinking" hitting No. 1 after an 11-week crawl through the Top 10.

CMT VIDEOS

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	TITLE/ARTIST
1	5	MAN AGAINST MACHINE GARTH BROOKS
2	1	OLD BOOTS, NEW DIRT JASON ALDEAN
3	4	MONTEVALLO SAM HUNT
4	3	GREATEST HITS: DECADE #1 CARRIE UNDERWOOD
5	6	ANYTHING GOES FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE
6	2	CRASH MY PARTY LUKE BRYAN
7	8	BRINGING BACK THE SUNSHINE BLAKE SHELTON
8	9	THE COWBOY RIDES AWAY: LIVE FROM AT&T STADIUM • GEORGE STRAIT
9	7	THE OUTSIDERS ERIC CHURCH
10	10	JUST AS I AM BRANTLEY GILBERT
11	11	PLATINUM MIRANDA LAMBERT
12	16	747 LADY ANTEBELLUM
13	14	GREATEST HITS SO FAR . . . ZAC BROWN BAND
14	15	METAMODERN SOUNDS IN COUNTRY MUSIC STURGILL SIMPSON
15	13	SUNDOWN HEAVEN TOWN TIM MCGRAW
16	19	IGNITE THE NIGHT CHASE RICE
17	12	THE BIG REVIVAL KENNY CHESNEY
18	17	PAIN KILLER LITTLE BIG TOWN
19	18	COLE SWINDELL COLE SWINDELL
20	20	I DON'T DANCE LEE BRICE
21	22	BRING YOU BACK BRETT ELDREDGE
22	21	WHERE IT'S AT DUSTIN LYNCH
23	23	RISER DIERKS BENTLEY
24	27	ANGELS AMONG US: HYMNS & GOSPEL FAVORITES • ALABAMA
25	24	NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL COUNTRY: VOLUME 7 • VARIOUS ARTISTS

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	TITLE/ARTIST
1	1	PERFECT STORM BRAD PAISLEY
2	3	TIL IT'S GONE KENNY CHESNEY
3	4	TALLADEGA ERIC CHURCH
4	5	SOMETHING IN THE WATER CARRIE UNDERWOOD
5	2	SHOTGUN RIDER TIM MCGRAW
6	8	I SEE YOU LUKE BRYAN
7	7	SUN DAZE FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE
8	6	CLOSE YOUR EYES PARMALEE
9	9	LIKE A COWBOY RANDY HOUSER
10	10	MAKE ME WANNA THOMAS RHETT
11	12	JUST GETTIN' STARTED JASON ALDEAN
12	13	LONELY TONIGHT • BLAKE SHELTON FEATURING ASHLEY MONROE
13	14	TAKE IT ON BACK CHASE BRYANT
14	11	MEAN TO ME BRETT ELDREDGE
15	15	HOMEGROWN HONEY DARIUS RUCKER
16	16	DRINKING CLASS LEE BRICE
17	17	LONELY EYES CHRIS YOUNG
18	18	GOD MADE GIRLS RAE LYNN
19	19	KISS YOU TONIGHT DAVID NAIL
20	20	FREESTYLE LADY ANTEBELLUM
21	21	AIN'T WORTH THE WHISKEY COLE SWINDELL
22	22	WHAT WE AIN'T GOT JAKE OWEN
23	24	SAY YOU DO DIERKS BENTLEY
24	25	TRAILER HITCH KRISTIAN BUSH
25	26	A GUY WALKS INTO A BAR TYLER FARR
26	28	TAKE MY TIME SAM HUNT
27	30	SHE DON'T LOVE YOU ERIC PASLAY
28	27	DRUNK AMERICANS TOBY KEITH
29	29	BABY BE MY LOVE SONG EASTON CORBIN
30	32	DON'T IT BILLY CURRINGTON

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	TITLE/ARTIST
1	2	DAY DRINKING LITTLE BIG TOWN
2	3	GIRL IN A COUNTRY SONG MADDIE & TAE
3	4	SHOTGUN RIDER TIM MCGRAW
4	5	PERFECT STORM BRAD PAISLEY
5	6	TIL IT'S GONE KENNY CHESNEY
6	7	SOMETHING IN THE WATER CARRIE UNDERWOOD
7	9	TALLADEGA ERIC CHURCH
8	8	SUN DAZE FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE
9	1	SOMEWHERE IN MY CAR KEITH URBAN
10	12	CLOSE YOUR EYES PARMALEE

SOURCE: CMT



Indianapolis' Union Station makes a grand setting for The Band Perry, whose new video chugs up to No. 8.

GAC VIDEOS

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	TITLE/ARTIST
1	1	SOMETHING IN THE WATER CARRIE UNDERWOOD
2	4	SHOTGUN RIDER TIM MCGRAW
3	2	LONELY EYES CHRIS YOUNG
4	3	LONELY TONIGHT • BLAKE SHELTON FEAT. ASHLEY MONROE
5	5	LAY LOW JOSH TURNER
6	7	PUT MY HEART DOWN SARA EVANS
7	6	PERFECT STORM BRAD PAISLEY
8	17	GENTLE ON MY MIND THE BAND PERRY
9	10	NEON LIGHT BLAKE SHELTON
10	11	MEAN TO ME BRETT ELDREDGE

SOURCE: GAC

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COUNTRY WEEKLY

Anxiously awaiting that new album from your favorite artist?
Eager to discuss the hot concert you just saw?
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AND VISIT
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WHO SAYS?

“You have to grow up, start paying the rent and have your heart broken before you can understand country.”



EMMYLOU HARRIS **B**



A **ROSANNE CASH**



C **PATTY LOVELESS**

ANSWER: B

COUNTRY WEEKLY

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T B S N H S I N G M E B A C K H O M E I
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RAMBLIN' FEVER
SAN QUENTIN

SING A SAD SONG
SING ME BACK HOME
SWINGING DOORS
THE BOTTLE LET ME
DOWN
THE FUGITIVE
THE HAG
THE ROOTS OF MY
RAISING
THE STRANGERS
WIFE THERESA
WORKIN' MAN'S BLUES



Find the words, titles and phrases in this wordsearch challenge submitted by **Larry Novak of Neepawa, Manitoba, Canada**. **NOTE**—they may appear vertically, horizontally, diagonally, backward or forward. Good luck!

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Brantley Gilbert

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Kris Bentley
(left) and Nick
Jamerson

FILL IN THE BLANKS

with SUNDY BEST

I like it when . . .

Nick: I don't have anything to do but watch Netflix and sit on the couch.

Kris: Squared. Ditto.

My favorite TV show is . . .

Kris: Cheers.

Nick: Breaking Bad.

My favorite color is . . .

Kris: Blue.

Nick: Kentucky blue.

If I could be anyone for a day it would be . . .

Nick: Derek Trucks.

Kris: Yeah, Derek Trucks, for sure.

If I could change one thing about myself it would be . . .

Nick: I'd be a little bit

taller [laughs].

Kris: I'm really bad if I'm talking to somebody and they're wanting me to laugh, I'll just say, "That's hilarious." But that means I don't think it's funny. And I hate doing that.

I would love to do a duet with . . .

Nick: Derek Trucks.

Kris: Bob Seger.

A guy can never have too many . . .

Nick: Guitars.

Kris: Tennis shoes.

I can't live without . . .

Kris: 1990s wrestling pay-per-views.

Nick: Flannel.

I wish I were . . .

Kris: Younger.

Nick: A dragon.

The one word that describes my day today is . . .

Nick: Cold.

Kris: Fun.

The first thing I do in the morning is . . .

Kris: Probably use the bathroom.

Nick: Let the dogs out.

Music is . . .

Kris: Everything.

Nick: My salvation city.

I think that _____ sucks.

Kris: Negative people.

Nick: Negativity.

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- *NPR*

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- *Wall Street Journal*

"Presley is a no-bullshit coal-miner's daughter, probably enough
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- *Rolling Stone*



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- *Bonnie Raitt*

"Quiet storm of slide guitar solos, blue notes,
three part harmonies and swagger."

- *Rolling Stone Country*

"My meagre vocabulary hardly does justice
to the music contained on this disc. There's
no other word for it besides, 'Magical.'"

- *No Depression*



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